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A

PASTORAL LETTER AGAINST FANATICISM,

Address'd to the

Mennonists of Friesland,

By Mr. JOHN STINN STRA,
One of their Ministers at Harlingen.

Translated from the Original Dutch.

(Which may serve as an excellent Antidote
against the Principles of *Enthusiasts* and *Fa-
natics* in general, and the *Herrnbuters* or
Moravians in particular)

BY HENRY RIMIUS.

To which is added,
A PREFACE shewing the Occasion of
that Letter.

LO N D O N:

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THE
P R E F A C E
OF THE
TRANSLATOR.

TIS not from a Motive of complying with Custom, that I prefix a Preface to this Letter; nor is there any need of my endeavouring to prepossess the Reader in its Favour, by a prefatory Discourse. Whoever will give himself the Trouble of reading it, will find the Subject treated of therein, so thoroughly sifted, and so much Judgment, Spirit, and Force of Reasoning shewn by the Author, that its own intrinsic Value will alone be sufficient to recommend it. This is the Cause of its having been translated into several Languages, and will be my Apology for having put it into an English Dress.

There is, however, a kind of Necessity that I should say something, in order to acquaint the Reader, what that Occasion is which the Author mentions in his Introduction as too well known, that induced him to write, and what he understands by

that double Leaven of Fanaticism, against the Infection of which he endeavoured to secure his Countrymen. 'Tis, in a few Words, on one Hand Herrnhutism or Moravianism, introduced into the United Provinces from Germany, several Years ago; and on the other, a kind of Convulsionism, that has lately taken its Rise in these Provinces themselves.

It might be expected, that I should here give an Account of the Tenets and Authors of this last-mention'd Sect: But as I have not seen any thing of them I could rely upon, I shall only relate a few Circumstances that are reported of these People. Some Preachers, in two Country Places, in the Province of Guelders, having in 1749, and 1750, stretched too far some Principles of Religion; their Audience, consisting for the greatest Part in innocent and well-meaning People, were highly affected thereby. I cannot exactly tell, what these Principles were; but thus much is certain, that they were productive of very singular Effects. For Instance, People were seen at Church, or at their particular Meetings for Devotion, to Sigh, Groan, and Cry out lowdly; all their Limbs shook, and they made the strangest Contorsions. They violently wrung their Hands, a cold Sweat dropp'd down their Face; they were almost choked for Thirst, and could not drink but with Difficulty. Their whole Body was in Convulsion, like that of a Man seized with the most violent Fits of the Falling-Sickness, being neither able to Walk, nor even to bear themselves up. They scarce utter'd any other but broken Words. Alas! what must I do, cried

cried they, with a mournful Tone; Oh! give me Jesus, I must have Jesus, Jesus. At last Jesus, according to them, manifested himself to them; to some soon, to others later. Then they pretended to be illuminated, and assured of their Regeneration, and fell into Transports of Joy and Extasies. 'Tis said, that People without having the least Idea of the bad State of their Souls, fell into the same Fits. Others, whom mere Curiosity had led to Places where such Scenes appeared, were seized with all these Symptoms. There were Children, who without having had any previous Instruction, said fine Things on the Corruption of Man, and the Mystery of Redemption. Others again, pretended to have heard Voices, which could not come but from Heaven. Nay, some were regenerated in their Dreams. —This was called by them the Work of God, the Work of Regeneration, or only the Work. —As the Condition of these poor People really deserved Pity; many Endeavours have been used to cure them of their Distemper, especially as it threaten'd to become contagious, and began to spread to the Hamlets of the neighbouring Parishes. People of Understanding and Probity, resorted to the Spot of these tragical Scenes, and called the Promoters of the Work to Account; many Sermons have been deliver'd against these Extravagancies, and several Writings publish'd to refute those that were so bold as to write in Favour of these pretended Marvels.—Whether or no this Sect is at this Time intirely extin^ct in Holland, I cannot take upon me to determine.

As

As for that other Leaven of Fanaticism, viz. Herrnhutism, against the Infection of which, our Author endeavours in his Letter to secure his Brethren; I have already given a succinct Account of this Sect, in the Candid Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Herrnhuters, commonly call'd Moravians, &c. which I have lately publish'd. I shall therefore say no more of them here but what is relative to this Letter. It was in the Year 1736, that Count Zinzendorf came to Holland, being invited thither by the Dutch, as he pretends, in his Natural Reflections, page 230, in these Words: 'It was not we that fought the Dutch; but they fought us. The Reason of his complying with their Desires, we find also there, p. 235, and 237, viz. that he had had no Idea of the Reformed, or Calvinists, and taken them all to be Reasoners; but as this was not indifferent to the Saviour, who being unwilling that so many Hundreds, nay Thousands of them should be abandon'd by the Moravian Brotherhood, (or, who designed that so many Hundred, nay Thousands of them should increase the Number of the Brethren) he (the Saviour) would have the Count to be an Eye-Witness of the State of his Affairs in that Church.—Secondly, That the Saviour, knowing that a Communion (by which he understands the Mennonists) consisting of Two-hundred Churches, was on the Point of being plunged into Arianism and Socinianism, would absolutely prevent this, and for this Reason made the Count, without knowing a Word of it, go and bring about this happy Effect by his Preaching.

ing*. *I could make some Remarks hereupon, were it fitting for a Preface; but this I cannot help mentioning, that it appears odd, that the Count is so ungrateful to the Saviour, whom he charges with the Direction of all his Actions, as not to acknowledge another Reason why he was directed to Holland, viz. to mend his Fortune. For 'tis well known, that the Count's Finances at that Time, were prodigiously low, and he overwhelm'd with Debts, and that he found Means there to satisfy his Creditors. But this by the Way. The Count after this first Journey, often visited Holland, and the Number of his Followers increased more and more. He, and his Disciples, have been particularly attentive to the making Proselytes among the Mennonists. As this Society consists of a great Number of pious, simple,*

* *The above is a Translation of the following original German. Ich kannte die Reformirte Kirche nicht, das war dem allgemeinen Heilande nicht gleichgültig. Ich dachte, ein Raisonneur und ein Reformirter wäre eben einerley.---Da nun der Heiland so viel hundert ja tausend Reformirte Brüder von der Unität nicht nur so abandonnirt wissen wolte; so musste er mich zu einem Augen Zeugen machen, was er unter den Reformirten fur ein, uns Lutheren gantz unbekantes Geschäffte habe.---Zum andern wusste der Heiland, dass eine gantze Religion von ein paar hundert Kirchen auf den Sprung stünde, von Arianischen und Socinianischen Händen gleichfahm im Schlaffe erschlagen zu werden. Das wolte er kurtzum nicht haben, und ich musste ohne ein Wort davon zu wissen, und ohne allen Vorsatz den Erlöser predigen der aller Welt Gott und Schöpfer wäre: Und das gab ein solch Schrecken unter diesem Volck, dass nicht nur die Seelen selbst Zeit gewonnen dem Verderben zu entrinnen, sondern dass in kurtzem die Kanzeln dieser Religion Zeugen der Gottheit Jesu mit Geist und Kraft bekamen, die sich selbst selig machten, und die sie hörten.*

Simple, and at the same Time very rich People ; this appeared to them an Harvest worth their Undertaking. Time has shewn, that they have not used the Sickle in vain : For only among those Mennonists that are called the Vereenigde Vlamingen en Waterlanders, several Hundred Souls have been brought over to Herrnhutism, within the Space of twelve Years ; as Count Zinzendorf himself avers, in his Natural Reflections, Page 247.

Thus having said, what I thought myself obliged to inform the Reader of ; I wish that this excellent Performance, which, I hear, has had an happy Effect in Holland, may produce the same in these Realms ; that is to say, prevent well-meaning People from becoming the Sport of Illusions, or Dupes of designing People, and recover those that are already fallen into such Snares.

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E R R A T U M.

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A P A S-

A

PASTORAL LETTER
AGAINST
FANATICISM.

Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they are of God: because many false Prophets are gone out into the World. 1 John, iv. 1.

FANATICISM, and the Spirit of INTRO-
Domineering, are the two most dange- DUCTION rous Enemies of Religion. Sometimes they unite their Forces against it; and at the very time they are working its Destruction, endeavour to appear as being actuated by nothing else than a Zeal for its Purity. You know, dear Brethren, the Endeavours I have used some Years ago, to maintain your Christian Liberty against the Attempts of human Power: You will, therefore, not be surprised at my giving you, at this time, a new Instance of my Zeal for your Churches, and the Welfare of your Souls; by endeavouring to secure you against the creeping in of that pernicious Evil, I mean *Fanaticism.*

B

'Tis

'Tis needless to dwell much on the Occasion that induces me to take upon myself this Care. 'Tis too well known; and, besides, I have no Mind to attack here any Person in particular. I have too much Aversion to it. My Aim is at *Fanaticism* itself. All the World knows, that the Fermentation, which some Time since has agitated the Minds of the Inhabitants of these Provinces, and which in the Civil State has produced so surprising Effects, has reached even to Religion. The bad Leaven that has introduced it, was partly brought to us from abroad some Years ago, and partly has of late had its Rise in this Country.

As I direct to you in particular, my Warning against so dangerous an Evil, I would not be understood as if I believed you to be more infected, or more exposed to it than others. No, dear Brethren, there are other Countries, other Christian-Societies, where this Seed takes Root, at least as easily as amongst you. But I fain would avoid being suspected (as already has happen'd) as if I endeavour'd to meddle with what concerns other Communions; the Care whereof I willingly leave to those, who believe it to belong only to themselves. Besides, I have a close Connexion with you, not only on Account of being Minister of one of your principal Churches, but because of the Christian Affection you bear me, and the singular Esteem you have formerly shewed for my Person, in exerting yourselves with so much Earnestness, though with-

without Success, to have me restored to the public Exercise of my Ministry; and I am very glad to have an Opportunity of publickly expressing my Gratitude for it. The Zeal you have shewn in my Behalf, gives me some Room to hope, that you will chearfully receive my well-meaning Exhortations and Advice, and that you will weigh them with an Attention that may cause them to turn to your Advantage.

Should there be any, besides your Society, that believe that this Letter may do them some Good; nothing hinders them to make the same Use of it as if it was address'd to them. My Views in publishing it are not confined by a Good-Will that doth not extend itself beyond certain Bounds. If, in labouring for you, I can thereby, at the same time, edify others, and fortify them, with you, in the Knowledge and Practice of the pure and reasonable Religion, whereof we all make Profession, this two-fold Success will fill me with Joy; and be to me an equal Subject for Thanksgiving to the Father of Light.

That my Cautions to you against *Fanaticism* FIRST may be attended with Success, and enable you the better to avoid its Snares; 'tis needful before all Things, to give you a just Idea of what *Fanaticism* is, and shew you in few Words wherein properly its Nature consists, and which are its distinguishing Characters. Without this, we only shall beat the Air and fight with a Shadow. This is the more necessary to be premised, as many People make use of

this Word without having a clear and precise Notion of what it imports. Sometimes Christians, of solid Piety, are unjustly reproach'd with *Fanaticism*; whereas others receive and really nourish this Monster within their Breast, whilst they reject the Name of it with the greatest Horror.

What *Fa-*
naticism
is.

Fanaticism, I believe, consists in persuading oneself, that the Spirit of God acts in us in an immediate and supernatural Manner, be it by particular Revelations, or by strong Impressions on our Souls; whilst at the same Time, what we experience within ourselves, is nothing else but the mere natural Effect of an heated Imagination and violent Passions; which, independently of the Spirit of God, are alone sufficient to produce them. 'Tis true, there are, among the *Fanatics*, People that do not feel within themselves any such like Impressions, though they make Boasts thereof, for the better playing their Parts. There are also some, who, finding themselves really affected, have too much Sense to believe that this proceeds from the Spirit of God. They would willingly that it were so; above all Things they wish that other People may not doubt of it; and this suffices them. But these are Dissemblers and Hypocrites rather than *Fanatics*. True *Fanaticism* consists properly in entertaining within oneself the *Persuasion*, which I have been speaking of.

God acts
on the Spi-
rit of Man.

I don't doubt at all, that the Almighty, whose efficacious and constant Action on the corporeal World may so easily be discover'd, acts

acts by his Spirit, according to his Goodness and Wisdom, on the Spirit of Man, on the Faculties of his Soul, and by the Means of these Faculties. Such, as true Piety sincerely unites with him, enjoy, without doubt, this Favour ; and may still at this Time rely on the fulfilling of that Promise of *Jesus Christ* *, that *the Heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask it of him* with all their Heart. But I maintain : First, that this Operation of the Spirit of God, whatever else it be, tends to the Advancement of moral Virtue and Sanctification, because this is the principal Aim, or rather the whole of true Religion †. Secondly, 'tis, in my Opinion, not less certain, that among the Faculties Man is endowed with, sound Understanding or Reason is that on which and by which God principally operates, when he finds it proper to support our Weakness by his Spirit. Nay, this is the most noble and the most sublime of those Faculties we have received from his Liberality ; his infinite Wisdom doth not allow us to think, that he should neglect this Faculty ; that he should act on Faculties of less Excellency without acting upon this, and above all Things, that he should contradict, weaken or destroy it. Add to this, that true Virtue, consider'd in its essential Parts, cannot derive its Origin but from a sound Understanding.

* Luke xi. 13.

† See my *Thoughts on Mr. Van den Honerts Letter*, Part II. p. 188.

Three
Conse-
quences
from these
Principles

Three Consequences, of great Importance in the present Subject, arise from what I have thus briefly advanced. 1st, That for every Judgment which we make with Solidity, tending to strengthen us in the Practice of Virtue, we may and ought to give the Glory thereof to God, and with a sincere Gratitude acknowledge the Concurrence of his Grace in it. 2dly, That no Idea or Action, that doth not contribute to the Advancement of Virtue, and which contradicts found Reason, can on what Pretence soever, and be it ever so much accompanied with marvellous Circumstances, be ascribed to God's Operation on Man. 3dly, That he is the most filled with the Spirit of God, who reasons on Things concerning Religion with the most Penetration and Justness, and who practises Virtue the best. These Consequences, thus proposed in a plain Manner, may seem to be Paradoxes. But be not affrighted, dear Brethren. Examine only with all possible Attention, whether the two Principles, from whence we have drawn them, are well grounded, and if they are inseparably connected with these Principles. I assure you, that if you do it, it will not be possible for you to stand out against the Evidence of these Consequences, how singular soever they may appear at first Sight.

God acts
in parti-
cular on
Imagina-
tion and
Passions.

But I must go further. I willingly admit, that the Spirit of God acts in an immediate Manner, not only on the Spirit of a Man of found Understanding, but also on his Imagination and Passions. As the End of our wife

wise Creator in giving us them, was that their Force and Activity should excite, bear up and spur on our feeble and slow Reason; why should we not likewise take it for granted, that, when his Wisdom and Goodness finds it convenient and necessary, he may by his Spirit, animate and fortify these natural Faculties we hold of him, and give them a Vivacity and Sensibility which they could not have had of themselves? But we ought to consider, that as the Imagination and Passions, in case we do not curb them, become fatal to Truth and Virtue, and are the first to seduce and corrupt us; we therefore, in general, cannot too much mistrust their Impressions: Hence it follows, that, in particular, we ought to stand well upon our Guard, that we may not take such and such Action or Impression of our Imagination and Passions for an immediate Operation of the Spirit of God in us, when in Reality it has no Claim to it, and proceeds from some other Cause, whatsoever that Cause may be. For we have seen that this is the chief Mistake of *Fanaticism*, and that herein properly consists its original and essential Nature and Quality. Herein lies the main Difficulty of the Business; and this is the Point we must above all Things be convinced of, in order to obtain a just Idea of *Fanaticism*. The following Remarks, which are nothing else but Consequences of what has been laid down before, will, I think, be very useful to us for that Purpose.

Remarks
hereupon.

1st Re-
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The Ope-
ration of
God often
confines
itself to
the
Under-
standing.

2d Re-
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When
this Ope-
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extends
itself to
the Ima-
gination,
it suggests
nothing
but what
is confor-
mable to
Reason.

1st, I observe therefore, that the Operation of the Spirit of God in us doth not always require, that in our religious Worship our Imagination be heated and our Passions moved and agitated. This is not necessary when the End of this Operation, which is to bring Man to a constant Practice of Virtue, can otherwise be obtained. If the Understanding, supported by the Help of God, is sufficient to produce such an happy Effect, what need is there to set the Imagination or Passions to work; they being Faculties whose first Destination is but to serve as Assistants to the Understanding and Reason? All depends here upon the natural Constitution of every Man; for by this Constitution God regulates the Measure of the Acting of his Spirit. Whoever sincerely applies himself to the Study of Truth and the Practice of Virtue, has no Cause to disquiet himself, as if he were void of the Spirit of God, on Pretence of his not feeling within himself those lively Impressions, those Emotions of the Soul, that Agitation which others experience.

2dly, If it is the Spirit of God that produces these Effects in such as feel them within themselves; 'tis necessary, that whatever their Imagination suggests to them, be entirely consonant to sound Reason and Truth. For, 'tis impossible that the same God, who has given to Man the Faculty of Imagination for assisting the Understanding and Reason, should act contrary to this his own Design, by filling it with Chimeras and Extravagancies;

cies; and what is still more absurd, to maintain Disorder and overturn thereby the Understanding and Reason itself. Such as endeavour to establish the contrary, alledge in vain the Omnipotence of God in support of their Opinion; for, he never acts but in a Manner conformable to the Rules of his infinite Wisdom; Rules, with which such an Operation as is endeavoured to be ascribed to this infinite Being, would be utterly inconsistent. The Vivacity and Fire of our Imagination are not a sufficient Reason to believe, that the Ideas produced thereby, come really from God. A burning Fever may sometimes fill the Head of one that is seized by it, so strongly with Ideas of Things which he believes to see and understand, though there is no Reality in it, that it is not only impossible, at that Time, to beat them out of his Head, but even after he has recover'd the Use of his Reason he finds it difficult to get rid of the Impressions that remain. The Imagination of a melancholy Man, who fancies that he is dead, or that his Legs are made of Straw, is every whit as strongly struck as that of a Man who persuades himself that he is regenerated, when he has no other Reason to believe himself such, than his own Persuasion alone; that is, the Heat of Imagination which he experiences within himself. Thus no Imagination ought to be ascribed to the Operation of the Spirit of God, which is not conformable to Truth nor founded upon Reason, and much less such a one as contradicts

dicts either of them, let it be accompanied with never so strong Impressions. Don't suppose that I intend here to set aside *Holy Writ*: On the contrary, I take it for an incontestable Rule of sound Reason, that Christians, who, upon solid Foundations approved by Reason, have received a perfect Revelation, ought, with the Help of sound Understanding, to try all their Ideas by this Touchstone. This Proposition, therefore, *viz.* that no Idea, no Imagination that comes from God can contradict Reason, imports also, that it cannot be contrary to the Gospel: Whereas, 'tis certain on the other Hand, that the Authority of the Scripture comes to nothing, should we set aside the Use of Reason in interpreting it; for, every one then might apply it according to his own Fancy.

3d Re-
mark.
The Ope-
ration of
the Spirit
of God
on our
Imagina-
tion is
always
attended
by a
Know-
ledge of
Religion
and a
Convic-
tion of its
Truth.

3dly, If it is true, as appears by what has been said, that the Spirit of God cannot inspire us with any thing that is false or contrary to Reason; 'tis not less certain, that he cannot be the Author of any Emotions of our Soul or inward Sentiments, which we may experience; unless those Emotions, and those Sentiments are founded on a solid Knowledge and rational Conviction of Religion and what belongs thereto, or at least be accompanied therewith: For, if it is the Creator's original Design, that the Imagination and Passions should be assistant to Reason and the Understanding; 'tis visible, that Reason and Understanding cannot call these subsidiary Faculties to their Aid, but for supporting some perfectly

fectly rational Idea, Design or Action. Without this, these Faculties act blindly and at Random; consequently 'tis an Action which ought not to be ascribed to the Spirit of God, though it may be, that the Consequences of such an Action have nothing externally inconsistent with the Duties of Religion.

For Instance, Sorrow for Sin, founded upon a Knowledge of oneself, and a Reflection on one's Conduct and Behaviour in Life, if it is kept within due Bounds, is a very good Motion of the Soul, and *worketh* * *Repentance to Salvation not to be repented of.* 'Tis not the same, nor can it be looked upon as an Effect of God's Spirit working on Man, if such a Sorrow proceeds from the Passions and a disorder'd Imagination. I knew a Man, who, as soon as he had drank a little more than ordinary, became surprisingly gay. On continuing to drink, he fell into a most extraordinary Sadness, he wept, wrung his Hands, and bewailed his Sins in a most lamentable Manner. But when the Fumes of the Wine were dispel'd, Serenity took Place again in his Soul: This is a manifest Proof that such like Symptoms can proceed only from a bad Disposition of the Body and a troubled and heated Imagination. In like manner, whenever such Fits have their Rise from false Ideas and erroneous Opinions, 'tis impossible that the Spirit of God, who in every Respect is a Spirit of Reason and Truth, can have any Share in it. Let a Man

be

* 2 Corinth. vii. 10.

be never so much prepossess'd with the Idea of being of the Number of the Elect, and this Idea be strongly imprinted on his Mind; let this flattering Persuasion afford him a most exquisite Joy: If all this is only founded on his own Imagination, deluded by false Ideas concerning the *Decrees* of God and *Inamissibility* of Grace; and if, besides, he is indifferent about the Dispositions of his Soul with Respect to his Duties and the Manner of acquitting himself of them, believing, that the Supreme Being takes no Notice thereof: Certainly, 'tis in vain, that such a Man flatters himself that his Joy is an Operation of the Spirit of God; because those Ideas, on which this Joy is founded, are directly opposite to Reason and the Scripture, and in themselves, and by their Consequences, destroy the very Essence of Religion.

4th Re-
mark.
The Ope-
ration of
God on
the Ima-
gination
and
Passions,
never
weakens
Reason.

4thly, Moreover, if our wise Creator has given us the Imagination and Passions in order that we thence may draw Assistance in the Use of our Reason; 'tis evident, that it belongs to the latter, to direct and moderate their Actions, and that nothing is so contrary to that principal End of the Author of our Being, than if the Imagination and Passions should act with such Force and Vehemence as to cause us to lose our Reason, or at least to weaken or render the Exercise of it difficult. Now is it not a great Absurdity to think, that the Spirit of God concurs in any Manner to the producing of an Effect, which, far from being worthy of him, is not so much as worthy

worthy of Man, whom it reduces to the State of a Brute? The Scripture openly condemns *Zeal without Knowledge* *. In like Manner, an immoderate Joy, which in the continual Danger we are of being drawn into Sin, inspires us with Negligence and Security; and a deep Sorrow, which not only oppresses the Soul and troubles Reason, but likewise affects the Body to such a Degree, that the Consequences thereof sometimes are lasting and fatal; are two Excesses, which disgrace every reasonable Being, and consequently can much less be imputed to him who is Wisdom itself.

5thly, I add lastly, that God in the ordinary Operation of his Spirit on the Faithful, acts always on the natural Faculties which he himself has given us, and preserves, and by the Means of these Faculties ; and that he follows the Order of that Nature which he himself has establish'd ; that is to say, he acts by Reason on the Imagination and Passions, and he makes Use of the Imagination and Passions to aid and support Reason. This follows visibly from what has been already said : And the infinite Wisdom of God doth not allow him to act on Man but in a Manner conformable to the Nature he has given him. Whence we likewise must conclude, that the ordinary Action of the Holy Spirit upon the Faithful, which is common to them all, and consists in enlightening their Minds, sancti-

* Rom. x. 2.

sanctifying their Hearts and comforting their Souls, cannot be distinguished from the Action of their natural Faculties, and that it is impossible precisely to determine, where the Action of our Spirit ends, and where that of the Spirit of God begins. Let it suffice to us, that we can give the Glory to God for all that is Good in our Thoughts, Resolutions and Actions; because 'tis of him we hold the Faculties we are endowed with, and we can no longer than he preserves them make Use thereof. Such therefore, as fancy they are able to know and distinguish certainly and precisely the Action of the Spirit of God on them, grossly deceive themselves. They ought rather to think, that every Action that differs from the Operation of a reasonable Soul to a Degree as to be easily distinguish'd therefrom, must have a quite different Cause than the Spirit of God. I speak here only of the ordinary Gifts of the Spirit: The extraordinary Gifts may, doubtless, be easily distinguish'd. I shall by and by speak a few Words concerning them.

**CHARAC-
TERS OF
*Fanaticism*** From these Remarks I have made, 'tis easy in my Opinion, to draw the Characters of *Fanaticism*. It is of Moment to be well acquainted with them, in order to guard ourselves against so dangerous an Adversary.

**1st Char-
acter.** A *Fanatick*, who brings to the Religion, such as he conceives it, a lively Imagination and strong Passions, and, on that Account, persuades himself, that the Spirit of God animates and acts in him in a particular Man-
ner;

**A vain
Chatter-
ing.**

ner; has commonly a prodigious Volubility of Tongue. He can discourse a long Time without stopping. Words cost him nothing, they seem, if I may say so, to flow from one another. This Easiness of Expression in him, is an Effect of his natural lively Imagination, enflamed, besides, by the Passions, which makes the Ideas in his Mind succeed one another with Rapidity and without Interruption, and that the Terms for expressing them, offer themselves to him in Abundance. This is likewise the Reason of that vain Chattering, so common in Women and Children, on Subjects very often of small Importance, on which Men of sound Understanding have so little to say; though the Ideas they have thereof are abundantly more exact. The Cause of it is, that the Imagination and Passions in the former are much stronger than in the latter. The *Fanatick*, who finds in himself a Superiority in this Respect, foolishly fancies that he has it immediately from God. He imagines that it is the Supreme Being, which produces the Ideas in his Mind, and puts the Expressions in his Mouth. He sometimes even carries his Presumption and Extravagancy to that Degree, as to ascribe to himself and those of his Class, the Promises *, which our blessed Saviour made to his Apostles, *viz. to pour upon them his extraordinary Gifts*. This proud Presumption makes them lose Sight of that prudent Timidity,

dity which keeps others silent. He confidently utters whatever comes into his Head. He is not restrain'd by any Fear of speaking Things void of good Sense, or which cannot stand the Test of sound Reason. For,

2d Cha-
racter.
Contempt
of Reason

2dly, He makes little Account of Reason; sometimes he has even an insuperable Aversion to it. Nor is this to be wonder'd at; his irregular Imagination is fruitful of absurd Propositions, which Reason disallows; or else it throws him into Opinions that are incomprehensible to the best Understanding, but which nevertheless the *Fanatick* admires and cherishes the more, the less he understands them. As sound Reason cannot be reconciled with the Ideas he is prepossessed with, and as it sometimes directly contradicts them; 'tis very natural, he should despise it and little mind its Lessons. He easily puts Reason to silence, as Imagination and Passions have taken intire Possession of his Mind and every where interfere with Reason. Thus the *Fanaticks* not only renounce Reason themselves, but spare no Endeavours to make others do the same. They know very well, that as long as Reason prevails, their Chimeras won't take Place. In order to deceive themselves and others, Reason, before all Things, must be banish'd. 'Tis therefore necessary for them to war against it incessantly, to endeavour by all Means to render it suspected, to cry it down as a *Faculty* entirely corrupted, and to treat it as a false and deceitful Light, whereof one ought to forbear making Use in

Re-

Religion. 'Tis in this we see, that all the *Fanaticks* busy themselves with Zeal and Earnestness.

As Reason, according to what has been said before, demands that Christians should examine by the Scripture, the Pretensions of such as maintain that the Spirit of God acts in them: 'Tis easily to be comprehended, that on this Account the *Fanaticks* must naturally make but very little Account of that divine Book; with the Decisions of which 'tis not more easy to reconcile, at least in a tolerable Manner, the Chimeras they are infatuated with, than it is to make them square with Reason. They don't believe *they* have much need of the Directions and Lights of the Scripture: For, if the Authors of that Holy Book were inspired by the Holy Ghost, they themselves, as they pretend, are animated and conducted by the same Spirit. And if they don't go so far as to treat the Scripture as a *dead Letter*; they, at least, maintain, that the Interpretation they give to it, comprehends solely the true and spiritual Sense; because this Interpretation is communicated to them by the Spirit of God, who enlightens and directs them. This is, in Reality, nothing else but setting the Holy Scripture aside, and substituting in its Place those pretended Inspirations which they boast of.

Solid Reasonings, coolly drawn, either from the Nature of Things, or the Scripture, excite the Indignation of a *Fanatick*. He has no Taste but for Transports of Imagination,

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racter.
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mination
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for lively Impressions and strong Emotions, which agitate and trouble the Soul. This follows from the Nature of *Fanaticism*, according to the Definition we have given of it. 'Tis in this properly, that the *Fanatick* pretends that the Operation of the Spirit of God consists : An Operation, which, if we may believe him, causes him when it is at the highest Degree, to experience celestial Transports and Extasies. 'Tis in this, that he distinguishes himself from ordinary People. These do not feel the same inward Motions or do not endeavour to excite them. This is enough for him to look upon them as spiritually dead, bereft of the Influence of Grace and void of the Spirit ; tho' at the same Time they are exact in their Observance of the Commandments of God and follow the Dictates of their Conscience, without endeavouring to make any Noise.

That which the *Fanatick* calls the *Work of Regeneration*, consists in sensible Alarms, cruel Agitations of the Soul, arising from a Consideration of the Misery and Corruption of our Nature, (which he supposes a great deal more dreadful than they really are) and in a kind of dreadful Amazement and Terror for God, (painting this adorable Master as a barbarous Tyrant) which sometimes throw the Soul into the greatest Horror. This dark Cloud clearing up, which, unless a Man falls into Dispair, cannot fail of happening very soon, the Imagination being too violently affected to be able to remain long in the same State ; then he be-

becomes composed, he flatters himself, that he has gone through all the Pangs that must precede a Conversion, and he really believes himself to be regenerated. Now supposing the Imagination to be influenced by their Persuasion, as it naturally will ; and that it excites Joy, which in its Turn will not fail to raise it to the highest Pitch of Delight ; what unspeakable Satisfaction doth not the pretended Regenerated then experience ? He thinks he tastes all that Sweetness which arises from an intimate Communion with God : he is, as it were, *melted* in divine Love. When this Emotion of the Imagination ceases, which of Course must happen when it is arrived to the highest Pitch it can attain ; all the Joy of the Regenerated vanishes gradually ; the Grace of God hides itself from him for a Time ; he falls into a State of *Darkness*. In short, all the Religion of the *Fanatick*, or what is the most dear to him of it, consists in nothing else but in inward Sensations, in Emotions of the Soul, or Agitations of the Imagination and Passions, which, like the Waves of the troubled Sea, rise and fall according to the different Disposition of the Body and Soul ; or according as they are worked upon by outward Means and Circumstances.

This, and the foregoing Character, taken together, make it appear, wherein properly the Nature of *Fanaticism* consists, viz. *That every Doctrine, Worship, Religion, and Action, from whence Reason is excluded, and where the Imagination and Passions bare the Sway and are*

look'd upon as *Operations of the Holy Ghost*, justly deserve the Name of Fanaticism. Such in few Words is the precise Notion we ought to conceive of this Evil incident to the human Mind. But, dear Brethren, don't therefore grow weary at my endeavouring to make you still nearer acquainted with its Properties. This will serve more and more to strengthen the Foundation, upon which I intend to build my Advice, and the better enable you to avoid this Evil.

4th Cha.
racler.
Contempt
of Virtue.

The *Fanaticks* commonly make little Account of moral Virtue; nay often speak of it with Contempt. Nor need we be surpris'd at this, if we consider, that it is from sound Reason alone we know that the Nature of Virtue is unalterable, that we are oblig'd to practise it, and that it is of infinite Importance in Religion. Through the Help of sound Reason we are likewise able to prove the Necessity of all this by the Scripture. Now, as sound Reason, according to what we have seen before, is of very little Account with them, it follows of Course, that they cannot have much Regard for moral Virtue. Whoever is used to strong and spirituous Liquors finds the most generous Wine insipid; just so, whoever has once given himself up to the Transports of an heated Imagination, has little Relish for a rational and cool Morality.

'Tis well if the *Fanatick* stops here, and doth not represent Virtue and good Works in odious Colours. As People that have strong Passions

Passions and a lively Imagination seldom keep a Medium in their Esteem and Contempt; so the *Fanaticks* use the same Conduct with Respect to Virtue, and carry their Disdain sometimes to the highest Pitch. Virtue and good Works are in their Eyes but pagan Duties, not worthy of a truly regenerated or spiritual and *enlightened* Christian's busying himself much about them. Nay, 'tis even dangerous with them to give oneself earnestly to Virtue: For, say they, that will make us trust to our own Righteousness and expect to be saved by our Works; which is the most biting Reproach they can invent against those that are not of their Way of thinking. Faith is the only Thing they boast of: But 'tis a Faith which consists not in a well-founded Conviction of the Divinity of the Gospel, but in an Heap of ill-grounded Imaginations, in Impressions that strongly affect the Heart, in Emotions that transport the Soul, in pretended internal Feelings. This is the Idea which they themselves give of it.

Though they dare not exclude Virtue and the Practice of moral Duties from being Characteristicks, by which a true Christian is to be known, since the Scripture speaks so explicitly thereof: Yet they assert at least, that Faith doth of itself and necessarily produce good Works, in the same Manner as a Tree brings forth its Fruit; that Virtue is not an Habit that may be acquired by repeated Actions, but that it is a Disposition which the Spirit of God works in us; conse-

quently that there is no Necessity, and even wrong to exhort People to it. Who sees not that Virtue is hereby destroyed, and all Zeal for it utterly banished ?

There is another Sort of People, who urge much the Observance of moral Duties, though in other Respects, they are to be rank'd amongst the *Fanaticks*. These, without Doubt, are the best of them, and 'tis Pity that their too lively Imagination is not sufficiently kept under by the Dictates of Reason. Their Conception of moral Virtue, however, is oftentimes very imperfect. They stretch some Duties too far, whilst they neglect others entirely. They betake themselves mostly to the Observance of such in which their Darling, that is to say, their Imagination can have the greatest Scope, and set the Passions to Work. I could very well shew, that there is no true Virtue but what is supported by solid Reasoning ; but 'tis not with this sort of People I have at present to do.

5th Character. I observe further as another Character of *Fanaticism*, that such as are given to it, are commonly puff'd up with Pride, and treat others with Haughtiness and Arrogance. As, on one Hand, Pride makes the greatest Part of these People believe, that they are influenced by the Spirit of God ; so, on the other, nothing is more apt to nourish this Pride and fortify them in it, than this vain-glorious Presumption ; and in Reality, is it not something very grand to be assured by inward Feelings, that God enlightens our Souls by the

the Beams of his Spirit, that he directs us in all our Transactions, and that we are among the Number of those who enjoy his Favour, without being liable ever to lose it? Whoever believes such Things of himself, can he be otherwise than infinitely flatter'd and pleased? Is it possible for him to be without a spiritual Pride growing more and more upon him; especially when he sees a Number of weak People, whom he has drawn to his Party, Kneeling before him as an Apostle, and receiving his Words as so many infallible Oracles; or when a Troop of Children, brought to him one way or other, desire publickly with much Earnestness, his Instructions, Prayers for them, and Blessing, and he thereupon, in Imitation of our Saviour, sends back these poor Sheep well comforted and satisfied, according to their Opinion?

But even when a *Fanatick* has not had an Opportunity to get so great an Authority; his Presumption of being favoured with the Spirit of God in a particular Measure, is alone sufficient to puff him up, to make him look upon himself as something extraordinary, to despise such as differ from him in their Ideas and Conduct, to condemn and disparage them as Unbelievers, that are still in the State of natural Corruption, or with a proud Compassion to bewail them as wretched and miserable People.

Is it not carrying Temerity very far, to require of God, that, whenever there is any Thing under Deliberation, he should immediately

diately decide it by the Casting of Lots ; as if this infinite Being was obliged; in order to humour our Desires, to do Miracles on the most trifling Occasions ? Is there less Presumption in boasting, (when we alter our Sentiments after such a Choice of an Object has been made,) that this Alteration proceeds from an immediate Inspiration received from above ? Or can there be any thing more daring, than publickly to maintain, that the same Spirit, which animated the Apostles, speaks still to the Faithful by our Mouth ?

The *Fanatick* endeavours in vain to varnish such proud Pretensions with a Pretence to Humility, by acknowledging himself an abominable Sinner : He cares the less for making such a Confession, as he puts Virtue and good Works at a still lower Rate. This Sort of People seems to have found the Secret, in one Breath to desire the Lord with the Publican, * *Be merciful to me a Sinner* : And to thank him with the *Pharisee*, that *they are not as other Men are*.

6th Cha-
racter.
Singular
Symptoms

I shall add but one Character more of *Fanaticism*. For 'tis impossible to give an Account of them all, and of all the strange Shapes it shews itself in. They are as various as the Chimeras which an Imagination can bring forth whenever it is not conducted by Reason. We often see *Fanaticks* change their Countenance, to be violently moved, to shriek, weep, tremble, fall into Fits, or shew other such like lamentable Symptoms.

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* Luke xviii. 11. 13.

These Accidents in any other Case, would be look'd upon as proceeding from a bad Disposition of the Body, or Paroxysms of some Sickness: But in *Fanaticism* they pass for severe Trials of the Faith, or for violent Assaults of Satan, who opposes the Conversion of his Servants, or for strong Operations of God's Grace in endeavouring to break the Hardness of an Heart, or for an extraordinary Influence of the Spirit of God, to render a Man fit to receive supernatural Enlightenings, nay even the Gift of Prophecy.

In what Manner the Imagination works in us, how it is stirred up and heated, and how it affects our Bodies, is a Secret to me; and perhaps will remain a Mystery, which, on Account of the narrow Bounds of our Understanding, we never shall unfold. But what is most certain and confirmed by Experience is, that this Faculty, whenever it is extremely heated and not bridled by Reason, has an astonishing Influence on the Body and all its different Parts.

The Imagination, in the first Place, chiefly when it has a Bent to Sadness, changes the Look of a *Fanatick*, disfigures his Features, and gives him a gloomy and mournful Countenance, by which he believes he ought to distinguish himself from the World. He never can get rid of it, at least not intirely; it will mix itself even with his Mirth and Gaiety and appear by his wild Looks and forced Laughter. Sometimes his Imagination

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tion works so much upon hirh as to make him *bend his Head like a Bulrush*, and forces from his fearful Breast Sighs upon Sighs, if not on Account of his own natural Corruption, (which he cannot commend, and which likewise, according to his Opinion, cannot be detrimental to him) at least of that of the World, which is void of the Spirit he is endowed with. So that it is not at all strange, that these pretended Elect should boast, that they know one another by their Looks.

How often do we see Women and young Girls of a whimsical Imagination, and unable to govern their Passions, swoon away, pant, have Suffocations and convulsive Fits, on the least Attempt to thwart their Humour? Can we after this be astonish'd to see such like Accidents happen to these weak Creatures, on their fancying, that the Devil, whom they represent to themselves in the most hideous and terrifying Shape, holds them fast in his Claws? May not such Effects cause an Impression even on the strongest Peasant on his being amidst People that are worked upon in this Manner, especially when he understands not whence this proceeds; and thus by the Surprise and Anguish he is feized with at this Sight, becomes gradually prepared to experience them himself. This is the sooner brought about, when such People perceive, that this is a Means to get the Esteem and Praise from the Spectators. Then they talk of nothing else but Revelations, Visions and Apparitions, which they

they boast of having been favoured with, during the Time of their Swoon and Extasy.

I will not deny that Imposture has sometimes a share in such things, in Order to draw Esteem and Veneration from the credulous Multitude : Yet I cannot see, why this Kind of Chimeras may not effectually enter into a troubled Brain, as well as so many other Follies fix themselves in that of a Man in an high Fever, or why a disorder'd Imagination may not as well, in good Earneſt, boast of being daily in Conversation with *Jesus Christ*, as a common Farmer pretend to be a King ; as one did, whom I met with some Years ago.

As the Object of our Dreams commonly consists in Things we have the most busied ourselves with the Day before ; is it not likewise very natural, that those Ideas, which continually rove about in the Brain of a *Fanatick*, should present themselves to his Imagination, when he is in Extasy, and totally bereft of the Use of his Senses ?

Moreover, the Imagination has a marvelous Power to persuade us of Things which we like to believe. At first it only represents them faintly ; but by often repeating the same, and our beholding them with Satisfaction, they make as lively an Impression as if their Objects were really true. Thus we see, that Liars, by often repeating the same Lies, begin at last to believe them themselves.

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There have been seen in former Times, infatuated Women, that believed themselves to be Witches, and were fully persuaded of their riding on a Broom-stick through the Chimney, to the Feast of their black Master, when by certain Drugs they had sufficiently stupefied their Senses, to give free Scope to their Imagination for employing itself in Visions and Spirits. Why should it be impossible to fall into the like Extravagances with respect to Objects of a different Nature? Might one not likewise form to oneself false Ideas of those Objects, capable of making on a Brain disordered in another Manner, Impressions strong enough to leave no more Room to doubt of their Reality, than there is of doubting of the most incontestible Truths. 'Tis in this, probably, among other Things, in which consists that *strong Delusion*, of which St. Paul says, *that it should make them believe a Lie.*

What I have been mentioning leads me to speak here likewise a Word to those, who, on Pretence of having supernatural Enlightenings, immediate Revelations and extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Ghost, claim an infallible Authority to publish their particular Doctrines, pretending that every Believer ought to receive them as so many divine Truths, and with the same Respect as if they came from the Apostles themselves. Whoever claims such an Authority, without giving Proofs thereof by visible and incontestible Miracles, is an arrant *Fanatick*, or perhaps something still

still worse, an Impostor and Cheat. 'Tis not impossible, that a Man, for the better guiding of others in the Search after Truth, may have received from God a superior Understanding and Knowledge, without being able to give Demonstration thereof by Miracles; but then he will support his Doctrine by solid Proofs and Reasons, and thus make it worthy of being received by all; not by Authority but by Conviction. Should Reason be deficient in the Support of it, and he pretend that his Doctrine is too sublime for admitting Proofs of that Nature, let him produce a *Demonstration of Spirit and Power*; that is to say, let him shew the Divinity of his Doctrine by the Power of Miracles and by extraordinary Signs of the Presence of the Spirit of God in him. This we have an incontestible Right to demand of him. Did not the Apostles themselves follow this reasonable Method, when they undertook to propagate the Gospel? But should his Opinions be incompatible with sound Reason and the Scripture, 'twill be in vain for him to flatter himself that he has received them from the Spirit of God: Nay, the greatest Miracles will then not be sufficient to prove his having a divine Mission. I might add, that such Pretences to an immediate Revelation overthrow that great Principle, common to all Protestants, viz. that the Holy Scripture is the only sufficient and perfect Rule of our Faith and Conduct.

I make an End here of my Description of the Nature and Characters of *Fanaticism*. My Intent

Intent in the Beginning, was but to treat shortly of this Matter, but whilst I was writing, my Thoughts more and more extended themselves, and I did not think proper to contract them: For it appear'd to me, that the more circumstantial I was in my Description of *Fanaticism*, the less you would be exposed to the being led away by the fine Appearances it covers itself with, and the pompous Pretensions it boasts of. Thus I flatter myself, that I have not lost my Labour; at least I shall, by means of what has already been said, take Occasion to be shorter in the Cautions which I now am going to give you against this dangerous Enemy.

ARTI-
CLE 1.
The fatal
Effects of
Fanaticism

Don't think, dear Brethren, that the Evil against which I endeavour to secure you, and against which I am exhorting you to be watchful, is of too little Importance to deserve so much Stir and to have so much Zeal made Use of against it. The Picture I have already given of it, must make you sensible of the contrary. But in order to convince you the more of the Danger this Enemy threatens us with, and to raise in you a just Horror against all that has any Affinity with it; I shall lay before you, in the first Place, those pernicious Consequences *Fanaticism* is productive of, as well with Regard to those that give themselves up to it, as to the true Religion. In the second Place, I shall point out to you several Circumstances which in many Respects expose you to the Danger of being drawn in by it, as many others have been. Thence it will

will appear, that in having directed to you my Exhortations against *Fanaticism*, I have not undertaken a superfluous Labour; and you will thereby be the more able to avoid with Care all the Steps that may lead you to so fatal an Extravagancy.

Consider seriously, I beg of you, dear Brethren, that *Fanaticism*, by its Nature, tends to draw us off from all reasonable Religion; nay, to banish it entirely from the Hearts of such as hearken to it. For how can a reasonable Religion find Place in such as despise found Reason, who renounce the Light it offers us, and who, in particular, won't admit its Dictates in religious Matters. A Religion which is not supported by Reason, or contradicts it, is an unreasonable Religion; or in other Words, a mad, a frantick Religion: Whereas a Religion, which is agreeable to Reason, is alone worthy of a Man, is alone conformable to the Faculties of a reasonable Being, is alone that which can be esteemed the most glorious Privilege which we enjoy. Every other Doctrine, every other Worship, is inconsistent with the Nature and Perfections of God, who is Reason and Wisdom itself, and cannot but exceedingly displease him. In short, a Religion without Reason, is, in Reality, no Religion at all.

Christianity, whereof we make Profession, may, in particular, glory in being a reasonable Religion *: For it is grounded on solid Reasons, and teaches nothing but what is per-

* Rom. xii. 1.

perfectly reasonable, honest and decent. Thus the more one strives to banish Reason from Religion, the more unavoidably one departs from the true Nature of the Gospel. If we have a sincere Regard for Christianity, if we look upon it as the most precious Treasure of our Souls, as a Gift of the Father of Light, for which we cannot sufficiently thank him, (and such ought to be the Sentiments of every upright Christian:) how careful should we be in guarding ourselves against *Fanaticism*, as 'tis evident, that this Enemy destroys the very Marrow, Life and Strength of true Religion, at the same Time that it clokes itself with that Name, and assumes the outward Appearance of it?

And
opens
the Door
to the
greatest
Errors.

When once we have given ourselves up to *Fanaticism* and renounced Reason, we become exposed to all Manner of Seductions: There is no Absurdity, no Doctrine so extravagant and pernicious, which may not enter our Mind, and the craftier an Impostor is, the more Chance he has to lead us wherever he pleases. The Imagination is vain and fickle, and the Passions are blind in themselves: If Reason ceases to hold the Rudder, we must unavoidably be carried away by the *Wind of every Doctrine*, provided it has only something to strike our Imagination with and to move our Passions. The most express Declarations in Holy Writ are then not able to prevent our being seduced, because 'tis indifferent to us, whether the Interpretation given to them is agreeable, or contrary to Reason. Thus

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we give ourselves over to be toss'd to and fro, as our whimsical Imagination, or pretended Spirit drives us.

A Seducer has here a fair Game to play. Provided he can talk well, and knows how to flatter or trouble the Imagination, nothing is impossible for him to bring about. If we hear to Day a *Fanatick*, who in his Enthusiasm urges the Doctrine of *Universal Grace* as one of the most important Articles of Religion, we shall be struck with his Reasons, and receive the Doctrine he teaches, as Evangelical and Apostolical. Let us six Months after, or in less Time, when this Impression is weakened, hear another *Fanatick*, who preaches *absolute Predestination* in the strictest Sense, and we shall admire the Strength of his Proofs, and with no less Zeal follow him than we did the former; provided he can only bring about an Impression on the sensible Souls of his Audience, superior to that which remained in them from the Discourse of the first. And indeed, as soon as we refuse Reason to be our Guide, we may alike be *Calvinists*, *Lutherans*, *Mennonists*, *Socinians*, *Roman Catholicks*, nay even *Mahometans*. And we really find Things of this Nature in the different Societies of the *Fanaticks*. Such Inconstancy in Sentiments and Faith, however, is unworthy of a Being endowed with Reason, and that loves Truth, and cannot but become very fatal to him: For 'tis expressly enjoined to Christians, *to be no more Children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine*,

*Doctrine, by the Slight of Men, and cunning Craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive *.* With what Horror, therefore, should we not view the Abyss into which *Fanaticism* endeavours to plunge us!

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Fanaticism
is perni-
cious to
all Moral
Virtue.

Let your Horror still increase, my Brethren, on considering, that *Fanaticism*, according to the Description we have given of it, destroys all moral Virtue. It openly cries down its Value and Importance, and, by the Strength of its Illusions, weakens and exterminates that Obligation we lie under to follow its Precepts. I shall not recapitulate here what I have said elsewhere of this Value, this Importance and Obligation †. If you have that Regard for Virtue and good Works which they deserve, you must be sensible from their Nature itself, that in the Practice of them Religion essentially consists, and that there can be no Religion without Virtue and good Works. You will likewise remember from *Holy Writ*, that the Gospel exacts the Practice of Virtue as necessary, and exhorts the Faithful every where in the most pressing Manner to the Observance of it: Nay, you must believe as an incontestible Truth, that we shall be judged according to our Works, and consequently, that it is of the greatest Importance to have them directed by Virtue.

Now as it is evident, that, in order to remain steadfast and immovable in the Work of the Lord, notwithstanding the many and strong Temptations that incessantly surround us, we are

* Ephes. iv. 14. † See the Treatise quoted page 5.

are in great Need of being continually exhorted and spurred on to our Duties: What Abhorrence ought we not to have to *Fanaticism*, that Spirit of Illusion, which unloosens all these Tyes, and not only, never or seldom urges the Necessity of Virtue and good Works, but even is so audacious as to maintain, that the pressing of this Article is putting the Cart before the Horse; that the Supreme Being takes no Notice of the Actions of Men; that the Gospel prescribes no Law, but only offers Grace; that it doth not demand that we ourselvess should do any thing but only believe; in one Word, that Moral Virtue is of no Value in Religion, but quite contemptible; that the Kernel and Marrow of Religion consist in an inward Feeling of Grace, in Emotions of the Heart, in Raptures of the Soul; and that it is even dangerous to make too much Account of Virtue, because this would be lessening God's free Grace. What is the Consequence that results immediately from these dangerous Principles? None else but what the Apostle rejects with so much Indignation, *viz. Let us continue in Sin, that Grace may abound* *. How ill informed must a Conscience be, that is darken'd by such Clouds as these? How faint must such a Person's Endeavours be to do Good, since he imagines he can gain nothing by it? How easily must one that thinks so, be brought to give himself up to all Manner of Vices, ex-

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* Rom. vi. 1.

cept he is still withheld in some Manner by a natural Aversion against doing evil ?

Such as endeavour to deceive themselves and others, and make it their Business to conciliate Religion with their Vices and the Enjoyment of all that flatters their Passions, cannot but extremely relish the Principles of *Fanaticism*. They naturally must receive them with great Eagerness. Their Mind finds there Repose and Tranquility. No such painful Precept as that *of working our Salvation with Fear and Trembling* is urged there ; nor are they desired to quit their ill Habits, be they never so inveterate, and to pluck out of their Heart those Passions which have taken the deepest Root there. And yet these People boast, that the Holy Spirit dwells in them, and that they are in an intimate Communion with God ; to whom they likewise leave the Care of directing the Sentiments of their Heart as well as their Conduct. Can there be Principles more contrary to the Practice of the Commandments of God, and more conducive to the Destruction of all Virtue ? If our Saviour asserted that his Miracles could not be the Effect of the Power of Belzebub, because his Doctrine with the greatest Force attacked Satan's Empire, that is, Sin : Which Empire, that of God, or that of Satan must we hold that these People advance, who with so much Zeal attack the Practice of Virtue ? Whencesoever this Spirit that animates them, may proceed from, 'tis undoubtedly true, that it cannot come from God.

Let

Let us further observe, dear Brethren, that whenever we suffer ourselves to be blinded by *Fanaticism*, we contract a great Disposition to submit to the Yoke of human Authority in Religion. A *Fanatick* who strives to get Adherents, must arrogate to himself an absolute Power over them ; and these cannot deny him any thing on that Head, when once they have yielded Belief to his Pretensions. Indeed, if it is the Spirit of God that influences him, has he not an indisputable Right to demand, that his Instructions be received as so many Oracles, and his Orders be obeyed, as if they were the Voice of God or that of his Son. Such as follow him, can they call in Question the Infallibility of the Spirit that speaks to them by his Mouth ? And nevertheless what Spirit is this in Reality, let us ask ? A mere Imagination, a vain Pretension inspired by Pride. 'Tis therefore evident, that such as give themselves up to be directed by such a Spirit, subject their Faith and Conscience to a most shameful Slavery, and set up for absolute Masters in the Religion of a mad and presumptuous Set of Mortals.

If you want convincing Instances of such like Slavery, you need but cast your Eyes on the many monastick Orders in the Church of *Rome*. They all owe their Rise to *Fanaticism* : The Article of blind Obedience is carried there to that Pitch, that People renounce even the Use of their own Reason, and in obeying the Commands of their Su-

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periors, scruple not to violate the Laws both of God and Man. Now, to introduce such like human Power into Religion, is to destroy its true Nature and **Essence**, 'tis changing the divine Worship into a Homage, of which Men are alone the Object ; 'tis rendering to weak Creatures that Honour which is only due to God, and which we deprive him of. 'Tis in particular, shameful to us Christians, foolishly to suffer ourselves to be persuaded to become Slaves of Men, we, whom *Jesus Christ has bought at so dear a Price*, and for whom *he has given himself, to purify unto himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works* *.

Though the *Fanaticks* generally speak much of the Death of Jesus Christ ; though they employ the strongest Expressions to embellish, or rather to disfigure that Article of the Christian Doctrine ; though they make Use of what is moving and affecting in that Part of the History of the Gospel, in order to stir up the Imagination of tender Hearts : Yet, by what has been said before, 'tis easy to be perceived, that in Reality, all they do is diminishing the Value and Efficaciousness of the Blood of *Jesus Christ* ; that instead of preaching this divine Saviour, 'tis themselves they preach ; and that they abuse his Death, in order to weaken or even to extinguish entirely in the Hearts of Christians, a Zeal for good Works ; and to draw from this good Master, who has given himself for us, as many of his own People as they can. But this by the Way. I

* Tit. ii. 14.

I perceive, that I insensibly fall in again 4thly, *Fanaticism* is with a Remark I have already made, viz. *Fanaticism* destroys all Virtue. This lies an Intro-
duction to all Crimes. that *Fanaticism* destroys all Virtue. This lies an Intro-
duction to all Crimes. *Fanaticism* extremely odious in my Eyes ; 'tis a Consideration which spurs me on more than any other, to exert myself against this Monster. Besides I have not exhausted that Subject so far, that I should not be able to add something further. There is Room to make you still more sensible on this Head of that Venom which *Fanaticism* carries along with it. Its dangerous Nature, and a sorrowful Experience, give me but too much Occasion to enlarge here upon.

I have shewed above, that *Fanaticism* robs Virtue of its Force, and destroys all the Tyes to moral Obligations. I add here, that it is able, whenever it has the Upperhand, to hurry its Followers to the greatest Crimes. It has but too often signalized itself in this Respect in a most deplorable Manner. 'Tis easy to conceive, to what dreadful Excesses People may be led, whom the strongest Tyes of Reason and Conscience can keep no longer within Bounds, and who only follow a disordered Imagination and Passions without Restraint. In Case they have a natural Inclination to some Vice, or a great Sensibility for certain seducing Impressions, and their Education, or an Habit has produced and entertained violent Desires in their Heart ; they will not fail to satisfy them ; they will give themselves up to their Bias without Re-

serve, unless Shame keeps them back. And this Shame itself they will lay aside, when they are among People of their Party, or when this Party is grown strong enough to have nothing more to apprehend from others. Their wicked Impudence may then even carry them so far as to canonise their Crimes and make them pass for Duties of Religion and Suggestions of the Holy Spirit.

It leads
in particu-
lar to the
Denying
of Tolera-
tion.

The *Fanaticks*, though *they come to you in Sheep's Cloathing*, are nevertheless *inwardly ravening Wolves* *. Whilst their Party is still weak, and they are about gaining People over to their Sect, they speak of nothing but Charity and Toleration. Yet no sooner have they got the Upperhand, but they make it appear, that they are the most implacable and violent Persecutors of all that won't hear them: Nay, their Arrogance, Animosity, and Fury, oftentimes breaks out sooner than is suitable to their Interest. They begin too soon to cry down and condemn as Hereticks and Infidels such well-meaning Christians as won't side with them; whereby they plainly shew, by what Spirit they are led. What can be expected after this, from People, should they once get Footing, who reject the moral Distinction between just and unjust, who cover their Designs, Undertakings and Passions, with the sacred Vail of an immediate and infallible Inspiration of the Spirit of God; who pretend that the World, with all the Blessings of God, are designed only for the

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* Matth. vii. 15.

Regenerated ; and that all others are to be looked upon as unjust Possessors of them ? Surely, nothing else but the most horrible Iniquities, on Pretence of doing God Service thereby.

Fanaticism is always busy, always in Motion to get its Imaginations received as certain Truths, and to make a powerful Party. It sticks at nothing, provided it may be serviceable to this End. And as that Obligation, which Morality lays upon us, to speak the Truth, is little minded by *Fanatics* ; if so be that in some Manner they still scruple to act against it, they easily employ Craftiness and Artifices whenever they appear to favour their Views. Nay, if this Interest, which they call the Cause of God, requires it, they fall to forging of Falsehoods and Lies. No Cheat, no Imposture is too heinous for them, whenever they can cover it with the sacred Vail of Religion, and serves them to deceive a credulous Multitude. Yet Fraud and Lies, whatsoever Pretence they may be coloured with, ought to be looked upon as most shocking Crimes, especially when they are made Use of in Things of the greatest Importance, as is Religion. *The Devil is the Father of Lies** : *And whoever is of him, who- ever loveth and makes a Lie, is expressly ex- cluded from the Kingdom of God* †.

Such as give themselves up to *Fanaticism*, often become liable to Drunkenness. They kennels. are at least in great Danger of falling into this Vice,

* John viii. 44. † Revelat. xxii. 15.

Vice, (as is easy to be conceived on considering that they make no Account of moral Duties) chiefly when they have a Bias to Excess and Voluptuousness. What contributes much thereto in many of them, is the bad Effect *Fanaticism* has on their Body. They fall into Fits, the Body is thereby weaken'd, and though they ascribe all this to the Working of the Spirit of God in them, yet they find need of Cordials and Restoratives. As strong Liquors, which besides, are not disagreeable to the Palate, can afford this Assistance, they take a little of them, and finding that their Imagination is thereby heated, and their Passions become more easy to be stirred up, which in the Eyes of a *Fanatick* is the happiest State he can be in : He the more willingly has Recourse to this Remedy on the first Opportunity. The more he uses himself to it, the more it grows a Custom upon him, and the more the Need he has of them increases. It soon happens, that he cannot any more without the Assistance of these spirituous Liquors, call the Spirit to him, or preserve himself in a Disposition of receiving it; especially when old Age has diminished in him the Fire of his Imagination, and slaken'd the Fervency of his Passions.

To Impurity.

Has not sad Experience made it often appear, that even Impurity, that infamous Vice, has crept into *Fanaticism*, and that by Means of this Vail it has not only transgressed the ordinary Rules of Decency and Honour, but even violated the sacred Bonds of Marriage.

When

When People give themselves over to carnal Voluptuousness, 'tis the Imagination above all, that seduces and draws them into it: This Faculty being heated, the Passions stirred up and enflamed, and neither one nor the other giving Way to the Empire of Reason and Virtue; 'tis easy for impure Desires to insinuate themselves and keep Footing, chiefly in the Hearts of young People who are more susceptible of them. This must chiefly happen to such as lived a disorderly Life, before they gave themselves up to *Fanaticism*. These shameful Desires hide themselves at first under the Appearance of a quite spiritual Inclination and Love, which nevertheless in Reality is nothing else but an Effect of Passion; *Fanaticism* being incapable to produce any other. They entertain and fortify themselves more and more, always under Pretence of a religious and meerly inward Union, till they come to that Height as to dare to shew themselves openly and desire to be satisfied. And if then this horrible Design succeeds, 'tis owing alone to the Help of *Fanaticism*, and to the Means of an absolute Authority which it has invested certain Persons with, and a blind Obedience to which it has subjected others. Even in the Time of St. *Paul*, People were found, *who crept into Houses, and led captive silly Women laden with Sins, led away with divers Lusts* *. But let us draw a Curtain before these bigotted Love-Pranks.

When

* 2 Timoth. iii. 6.

To the
most
wicked
Attempts
against
Govern-
ment and
Civil
Society.

When *Fanaticism* has got the Upperhand and works with all its Forces, 'tis not only able to corrupt Religion, but even to overthrow Civil Society. The Spirit which animates it is too eminent, too divine, to subject itself to any human Power; on the contrary, all must buckle to and obey its Orders. A *Fanatick* in his Dreams often sees an earthly Kingdom, where the Faithful exercise an absolute Power over the World. Now if he is supported by a powerful Party, why should he not take it into his Head that this happy Time is come? Woe then to that Part of the Human Race, that falls not in with the same Follies. He spares nothing to procure Success to his wild Projects, and scruples not to attempt Things of the greatest Temerity, committing the most barbarous Violences, raising Seditions, nay, even acting a Fury itself. In short, *Fanaticism*, when it is arrived to its Height, is naturally disposed, with Haughtiness and Insolence to trample under Foot *whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report, if there be any Virtue and if there be any Praise* *. Do you desire an Instance of it, dear Brethren? Cast but your Eyes on the Impieties and Wickednesses, that were committed above two Centuries ago, by the *Anabaptists* at *Munster*. 'Tis impossible to think on those abominable Excesses without Horror.

Here

* Philipp. iv. 8.

Here *Fanaticism* was arrived to the highest Pitch it could arrive to. This Instance will convince you, that the Description I give you of *Fanaticism*, how dreadful soever it is, is nevertheless not exaggerated.

I hope what I have advanced will be rightly understood. I only say, that *Fanaticism* being arrived to its highest Pitch, is in its Nature capable of producing those terrible Effects which I have mention'd. My Meaning is not to accuse all *Fanatics*, or any one among them of such Crimes, nor do I suspect them thereof. I suppose, that the greatest Part are far from being willing to give into such like Excesses, and that many of them even have a great Aversion to them. But when a Man once has renounced Reason, and given himself up to the Conduct of blind Guides, *viz.* his Imagination and Passions, who can mark the Bounds beyond which 'tis not to be feared he may go? 'Tis in Things of this Nature the same as it is with Crimes in general. Men do not arrive all at once to the highest Degree of Wickedness. The Corruption increases by Time, and is gradually rooted in the Heart. It appears by what I have said, how much *Fanaticism* facilitates such a Progress.

We tremble, dear Brethren, at the Idea of those terrible Excesses I have represented to you. With what Attention therefore ought not every Christian that loves Virtue, to stand upon his Guard, that he may not receive into his Soul the least Seed of *Fanaticism*, of this
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venomous Plant, which is no sooner arrived to its intire Growth, but it produces bitter and deadly Fruits?

5thly, *Fanaticism* is infinitely prejudicial to the Welfare of particular Persons that give themselves up to its Illusions.

What I have said hitherto might suffice to engage you to be upon your Guard against *Fanaticism*, to fear it, and even to inspire you with the greatest Horror against it. Let us, however, add, that it, even with Respect to this Life, draws upon those that are given to it, most deplorable Consequences. How many People doth it not, by the mad Zeal it inspires them with, cause to neglect the Care they ought to have for their temporal Affairs, Profession and Family? How many are there, who, infatuated with its Chimeras, willingly sacrifice their Substance, in order to propagate and perpetuate them; whilst others, whose Views are less disinterested, enrich themselves at the Expence of the first? These at length, when the Charm is over and the Spirit vanished away, regret but too late, the Sums they have lost, and lament their having been the Sport of such Illusions.

But this is not the greatest Evil to which *Fanaticism* exposes us. There is one still more terrible which I shall mention. *Fanaticism* not only blends and confounds all the Ideas of Religion in those unhappy People whom it seduces, but oftentimes deprives them even of the Use of their Reason, and throws them into downright Madness, or the greatest Despair. Examples of it are not wanting. Passions that are always in Action, always impetuous, are already a Kind of Folly, which

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continually increasing, is at last turned into a Habit, and becomes fatal to the Understanding and Reason. Feeble Brains cannot endure the Racks and perpetual Transports of an Imagination that is continually agitated, and continually in Disorder: Transports, however, which are necessary to him, that wants to excite and entertain within himself that pretended Illumination of the Spirit, in which *Fanaticism* consists. Besides this, when pious Souls endeavour to conciliate those defective, absurd and contradictory Ideas which *Fanaticism* gives; it may easily happen that they lose their Understanding, and fall into a kind of Delirium, which oftentimes degenerates into perfect Madness and Rage; Nay, even when such Persons, by the Blessing of God, and the Use of proper Remedies recover, there nevertheless remains, for the greatest Part, a Sort of Weakness and Indisposition, which always gives Room for apprehending a Relapse. But to these terrible Accidents are such only liable as most earnestly stick to *Fanaticism*: Such as are only slightly given to it have nothing to fear, because they are under little or no Concern about the Difficulties of their System.

When Persons whose Temper has a Turn to Melancholy, fall into the Delusions of *Fanaticism*, if they do not feel those lively Impressions of the Spirit, that Illumination which the others boast of as an interior Experience of Grace; if this sorrowful Privation holds on, what is the natural Consequence thereof? Thoughts that have so afflicting a Matter

Matter for their Object, cause Trouble to the Soul; such People imagine that they have no Grace further to expect, and as Reprobates are to all Eternity excluded from God's Favour: Thus having no sound Ideas of Religion which might pacify them, they sink under the Weight of Despair and all the direful Attendants that accompany it. Experience has too often verified this. Old People in particular, have been found to end their Career in this tragical Manner: For Age having extinguished in them the Fire of their Imagination and Passions, they can no more experience those inward Impressions, those lively Emotions, the Feeling whereof flatter'd them so much, and which they foolishly took for a Pledge of their Regeneration, and a sure Sign the Spirit of God gave them of its Communion with them. Such is the terrible Abyss, into which oftentimes those cast themselves headlong, who in Matters of Religion forfet the prudent Directions of Reason, and leave themselves to the Conduct of their Imagination and Passions.

6thly,
Fanaticism
exposes
Religion
to Con-
tempt.

Lastly, (For 'tis Time I should begin to take in Hand the remaining Parts of this my Letter) among the many bad Effects of *Fanaticism*, this is not the least, that it tends to expose Religion to Contempt, and to make it cheap in the Eyes of Atheists, Deists, and all such as have no sincere Affection for it. By Reason alone we can stop the Mouths of these People; and 'tis alone by solid Arguments we convince the incredulous, and bring them

them to acknowledge the Truth and Divinity of the Gospel. The continual Practice of moral Virtues is the most beautiful Ornament of Religion; this renders it amiable and dear to all that are Upright, and makes ashamed such as stand up against it. This is that *Light*, which true Christians *must let shine before Men, that they, seeing their good Works, may be incited to glorify their Father which is in Heaven* *. But when instead of this, Chimeras and Dreams of an airy Imagination, which in themselves deserve to be scoffed at, are given out for Religion; what Advantage must its Enemies not reap therefrom? They are ready to cast on Religion in general that Blame, which is applicable only to these Extravagancies; they represent it as an human Invention, as the Production of a terrified and disorder'd Imagination; and often succeed, chiefly when Interest and Passions are on their Side, in rendering it suspicious and contemptible to such superficial Understandings as never studied its true Principles, because they never examined any thing to the Bottom.

Neither can rational People relish those Excesses which *Fanaticism* carries on under Pretence of Religion. On the contrary, they become prejudiced against Religion itself, whose sacred Name *Fanaticism* takes upon itself and disgraces, and they judge no more but on very false Ideas. Look there, (say People that are uncertain and wavering in

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* Matth. v. 16.

Matters of Religion) what Influence vain Imaginations and frivolous Terrors have on a blind Multitude, and how great a Party *Fanaticism* can make itself by that Means! Why should one not think, that *Christ* and the Apostles could have propagated their Doctrine in the same Manner, and cast a Mist before the Eyes of the World, which then was no wiser than now, without doing real Miracles? Such as speak thus, don't consider that there is an infinite Difference in these two Cases, as well with regard to the Miracles, as the Doctrine supported thereby. Jesus Christ and the Apostles by their Preaching aimed at nothing else but to root out the vulgar Prejudices; whereas *Fanaticism* has at all Times made use of them as the Basis of its whole Edifice. 'Tis therefore visible, that *Fanaticism* countenances the Progress of Incredulity, Impiety and Atheism.

The *Fanaticks* themselves very often help to strengthen the Party of Irreligion. For having been the Sport of a great Number of Imaginations, one always more extravagant than the other, and perceiving at last their Mistake, yet without knowing the solid Foundation on which Religion is built; they conclude in one Breath, with that Precipitation and Temerity which is common to them, that upon the whole, it is no more worthy of their Attention, than the different Chimeras they have hitherto been deluded with.

If

If therefore, dear Brethren, you have that high and sincere Esteem for Religion, Virtue and Christian Faith, which they deserve; if you value good Manners; if the Salvation of your immortal Souls is dear unto you, a Salvation to which you cannot come but by the Way God's Grace has mark'd out for you, that is to say, by a reasonable Faith, and by pure Virtue; shun *Fanaticism* as the most dangerous Plague that can be: For you see that it destroys all that is reasonable, all that is agreeable to God, all that concerns your eternal Happiness.

I believe, dear Brethren, that I have said enough against *Fanaticism* to cause in you a very just Aversion to it. 'Tis possible, however, that this Aversion might not be a Preservative powerful enough to you: For there are Dispositions in the Constitutions of Man, and Circumstances in the present State of Christendom extremely favourable to *Fanaticism*, whereof it knows very well how to take Advantage, and by the Means of which can make its Way when you the least are aware of it. I shall therefore lay before you those Dispositions and Circumstances, in order that you may the better know the Danger against which I am endeavouring to caution you; and not find it strange that *Fanaticism* makes a sudden and considerable Progress, and draws a great Number of People to its Party. Thus should it happen to you to be Witnesses of such like Events, you will be the less amazed at them, and not be tempted to be

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The
Causes of
Fanaticism

lieve them to be the Effect of a supernatural Power.

1st Cause.
Ignor-
ance of
Religion.

I rank, in the first Place, that profound and deplorable Ignorance which is to be met with among the Generality of Men, though they bear the Name of Christians. How many are there that scarce think on Religion, and whose Pleasures and temporal Affairs are the only Things that ingross their Thoughts? Others that are something better, know in general, that there is a Necessity of being religious, or at least they are willing to suppose it necessary; but how would they be puzzled, were they obliged to explain what the Grounds of Religion are, wherein its Nature consists, and what is necessary to be known and to be done in order to deserve the Name of a religious Man? And if there are others, who still remember something of the Discourses they have heard on some Truths of Religion; they nevertheless must be number'd among the Blind and Ignorant, because all they know consists but in unconnected Fragments and Scraps they have gathered here and there, and which they know not how to set together in a reasonable and coherent Manner.

I don't think I should exaggerate in averring, that there are twenty Christians to one, who are Christians only by Custom and without knowing why; who call themselves of the Religion they profess for no other Motive than to be conformable to the Fashion of the Country they are born in, or to follow blindly the Example of their Parents, Friends, and such

such among whom they live, (not to mention at present Principles of a worse Kind). This is the State of Christianity in Cities and most populous Places, where one might expect to find the most Knowledge, and the Minds of People the best cultivated. 'Tis infinitely worse in the Country, where Christian Education in general is so much neglected, and where there is so little Opportunity of Instruction, that it is much if they can attain to read and write.

That Principle of the *Roman* Church so favourable to Superstition, that the study and thorough Knowledge of Things belonging to Religion ought to be left only to the Clergy, bears but too much Sway among us. It were to be wished, that even all they had a perfect Knowledge of it! But if I dare speak the Truth, 'tis far from being so. The greatest Part of them are content if they can every Sunday for an Hour or two discourse from the Pulpit on Things that are commonly but ill-connected together, and oftentimes without understanding themselves the Subject on which they are speaking. How many are there that would be put to a Nonplus, were they obliged to explain Religion in the Whole and in all its Parts, and to deduce it from its first Principles, or to demonstrate in a just and precise Manner the Truth and Divinity of the Gospel? And indeed it must be owned, that they have had but little Means to acquire a more extensive Knowledge; which may in some Measure plead their Excuse.

cuse. But this is no Argument at all against its being true, that the greatest Part of Christians is immersed in so deep an Ignorance as cannot be sufficiently lamented.

This is the very Thing which gives an Entrance to *Fanaticism* with all its Chimeras: For in Reality, what Opposition can *Fanaticism* find from People, who in Matters of Religion have never made much, or any Use of their Reason, and, if I may so express myself, suffered it to grow rusty? There is nothing which they may not be made to receive as Religion, because they do not know its true Nature, or have very imperfect Ideas of it. If they have once in their Lives made *Confession of their Faith*, as 'tis term'd, it has not been in Consequence of a rational Judgment: They have taken a Religion by Chance: They can easily digest the most absurd Ideas of it; and with the same Readiness, go over to a new Doctrine, whenever it strikes their Imagination with something that appears marvellous to them, or moves their Passions: Incapable of trying the Spirits whether they are of God, they believe, without examining, every Spirit that offers itself to them, and can produce some Emotion in their Soul.

Gross Ignorance is the Mother of that stupid Admiration which makes People gaze and stare at the Sight of every new and extraordinary Thing that presents itself, and receive immediately, as by a Kind of Contagion, dangerous Impressions therefrom. Thus History teaches us, that in the most dark

dark Ages and amongst the most ignorant and uncultivated People, *Fanaticism* has always made the greatest and most rapid Progress.

Not only Reason in the greatest Part of 2d Cause. Christians has been ill cultivated, but even the Religion which they have embraced, has too often given a wrong Turn to their Minds and produced in them a false Taste extremely favourable to *Fanaticism*. What I advance here will perhaps be offensive to some Persons. But I cannot help taking Notice of it, and intelligent People know the Reality of what I say. In almost all the Communions which at this Day divide Christendom (and when has it been better since the Time of the Apostles?) a Door is open'd to *Fanaticism*, by rendering Reason suspected in Matters of Religion, and maintaining several false Propositions as important Truths.

How many Prejudices do we not meet with among Christians contradictory, in a most direct manner, to good Sense, and which, nevertheless are inculcated as so many essential Points and capital Truths of Religion? Eminent Divines, and after them, entire Societies, have formed to themselves the most unreasonable Ideas of God, his Dealings with Mankind, his Grace, the Redemption of Jesus Christ, and some other Articles. They represent to themselves that Being, who is all Holiness and Goodness, as a violent Tyrant that acts only by Caprice and Self-Will. The Children suck in these Doctrines with their Mother's Milk; their Mind is possessed

therewith before they have Strength to guard themselves against them ; and afterwards they hear these Things held forth in Sermons as essential Articles of Faith.

What a strange Idea do not many People form to themselves of Faith ? Just as if the Merit and Excellency of it were in Proportion to the Unreasonableness and Absurdity of the Doctrine to be believed.

Others again, despise sound Christian Morality, and endeavour to abate the Value of Virtue, nay, even to destroy it. Now when we are inured in such like Sentiments, can we be much disposed to hear sound Reason ? Is it not natural, on the contrary, that we should reject its Lights as false and deceitful ?

Many Divines, far from making Use of Justness and Solidity in their Instructions, and urging a judicious Inquiry into Religion, openly withstand Reason and omit nothing to exterminate its Use ; and the People readily follow their Footsteps. How many Divines are there, who confine their whole Labour in Divinity to the Straining of their Imagination in finding out of Figures, Images, Emblems, Types, and other Things of that Taste ; and the more singular they are, and the less they can be conciliated to one another, the more they are pleased with them ? These fine Discoveries are given out for the Marrow and Quintessence of the Christian Doctrine, for sublime Mysteries of Prophetic Divinity. And nevertheless they are nothing else but Phantoms, which the Imagination amuses itself

self with to bring forth, whilst Reason is in a State of Idleness and lies neglected. Now, a Person that is infatuated with such like Prejudices, can he be otherwise than thoroughly disposed to give Ear to *Fanaticism*? These extravagant Ideas are the very Seed of it, which in order to bud and grow, has only need of falling upon a lively Imagination supported by impetuous Passions. The Understanding darken'd by such Clouds, can no longer distinguish true from false; it becomes afraid of sound Reasoning and gets an Inclination for *Fanaticism*. A Trifle is then sufficient to make it fall into the greatest Extravagancies and to become the Sport of most strange Illusions.

Thus is the Way imprudently paved for *Fanaticism* in most Christian Societies. The *Fanaticks* know this full well, and from thence become so audacious and enterprising: Their indiscreet Fore-runners, that is to say, such as thus have paved the Way for them, find it therefore oftentimes very difficult to refute them.

Let us add here another Cause of *Fanaticism*, which consists in a strong Imagination and Passions too easily to be moved; two Things that have a great Affinity with one another and commonly go together. Such in whom they are found, are in imminent Danger of being insnared by *Fanaticism*; especially if Ignorance, and a Prepossession with absurd Opinions, second the Seduction. The natural Dispositions in Men infinitely differ

differ from one another. 'Tis nevertheless certain, that the Imagination and Passions in the greatest Part of them have a much superior Force, than the Faculty of reasoning coolly and with Preciseness. The latter is commonly utterly neglected in the Education; whereas, with respect to the first, all outward Objects from Infancy concur to excite and maintain them; and the continual Use that is made of them, gives them a far greater Power than they naturally would have had. Above all, as I have already observed, they are predominant in Women, young People of both Sexes, and Children. Thus we find, that they fall much easily into *Fanaticism* than others, and that the Symptoms of this Evil shew themselves in them in their highest Excess.

Though the *Fanaticks* give up Reason entirely, yet they have still so much Conduct as to make Use of the most proper Means to heat the Imagination and put the Passions in Motion. They mislead pious and well meaning People, (For among them are likewise weak Heads) by an outward Shew of Devotion that proclaims a sublime Piety. Eyes that always are cast down, a serious Countenance, a slow Speech, a simple Dress strike the Imagination of those good People, who, finding in general little Piety and true Virtue in the Communion they belong to, follow the new Doctrine that is attended by so fair Appearances.

They

They insinuate themselves into the Favour of melancholy People, by continually lamenting the extreme Corruption of human Nature, Man's intire Inability to do good, and the sinful and damnable State all the Posterity of *Adam* is plunged into: All these Things they paint out in the most frightful and terrible Colours of which they are capable.

They terrify tender Souls by making them dreadful Descriptions of the bitter Sufferings that attended the Death of our Saviour; Sufferings, whereof they know how to make such a Use as is conducive to their Views, though at the same Time they are utterly ignorant of the true End thereof, the moral End, or at least have no Regard thereto.

As for Women of delicate Constitutions and young Girls that like to hear Love-Tales; they have the Art of touching their Hearts and gaining them over by luscious Expressions cover'd with a thin Vail of a spiritual Sense, and perhaps borrowed from the Canticle of *Solomon*.

Sturdy and hard-hearted People must be overcome by Terror. These Persons therefore, they attack with a stern and angry Mien, and denounce against them nothing but Death and Damnation: And whilst on the one Hand, they represent to them an Almighty and incensed God ready to take Vengeance, and on the other, Hell and all the Devils in it let loose upon them; they have all the Success they could wish in taming their sturdy Tempers.

They

They allure such as their Temper inclines to Joy, by entertaining them with nothing else but the internal Joys of the regenerated Person, and the delightful Sensations which he feels. They take particular Care not to stir up any other Passion but that by which Persons of this Character may be taken.

The proud Man is easily induced to persuade himself that he is under the immediate Influence of the Spirit of God. He is exceedingly fond of a Notion that exalts himself so much in the Eyes of others, as well as his own.

The *Fanaticks*, in general, take great Care to keep the Imagination in a continual Heat and Agitation. For this Purpose, they affect a lofty Stile, full of high-strained Expressions taken from the Oriental Languages, bold Metaphors, unnatural Figures, and far-fetch'd Emblems; a Kind of Language which a sound Understanding seldom can make Sense of.

From all this 'tis very natural to conclude, that a too lively Imagination and violent Passions not govern'd by Reason, bring Men in extreme Danger of falling into *Fanaticism*, and may make them of its Party even before they themselves are aware of it.

4th Cause. A weak and distemper'd Body increases still more the Danger we are speaking of. **A vicious Disposition of the Body.** The wise Creator has so closely united the Body and Soul, that the bad State of one almost always influences the other. Experience shews, that a sick Person seldom reasons with the

the same Justness and Precision he doth in a State of perfect Health. There are several Diseases which render the Imagination subject to the oddest and strangest Impressions. An impure Blood, chiefly when it is corrupted by an overflowing of the Gall, and in general the Vessels of the Body being obstructed and the Fluids thickened, affect the nervous Kind in an astonishing Manner, and act violently on the nice and tender Contexture of the Fibres of the Brain; whereby the Imagination gives itself full Scope and knows no Bounds. A Person in this Situation commonly falls either into an excessive Joy, or deep Sorrow, or even into both of them by Turns; and those Symptoms oftentimes appear before we are aware of the Indisposition of the Body that causes them, which on that Account, in many is not attended to and neglected.

People in this Condition find no where better Opportunity to busy their Imagination than in *Fanaticism*. Whenever therefore, its singular Opinions are proposed to them, they eagerly receive them as most exquisite Dainties. In the mean Time, the Disorder, into which these Illusions throw the Mind, renders that bodily Disease still worse and worse, by which the Mind was originally affected.

Hence in particular, we may account, why People of Learning and Experience have sometimes joined the Party of *Fanaticism*. Learning is not always attended by Wisdom. The greatest Part of learned Men follow neither Rule nor Measure in their Study. They

go

go beyond Bounds in their Labour and Application, whereby the Body suffers; and as this has an Influence on their Mind, it makes them often embrace Chimeras and Dreams as so many important Truths.

5th Cause. Vice and Depravation of Manners likewise favour *Fanaticism* and facilitate its Progress. Deprava-
tion of
Manners. Hypocrites and such as only pretend to Sanctity, are fond of a Religion which they can conciliate with their bad Habits and disorderly Passions. Thus we see, that as soon as ever *Fanaticism* sets up its Standard, and causes it to be proclaimed, that every Sinner, how much defiled soever he may be, may come to Jesus and leave to him the Care of cleansing him; People run in Crowds to range themselves under so convenient a Discipline. Can a Doctrine, that doth not insist on Virtue and Purity of Manners, fail of pleasing them? Must they not earnestly support a Party, that puts them in a Condition to satisfy their Passions, and perhaps to be followed as Oracles, by a giddy Multitude, or even to get Riches, and under Pretence of a Zeal for the Glory of God promote their own Interest? Besides, 'tis a peculiar Property of Vice and Sin, to eclipse and corrupt Reason. From hence the Sinner lies open to all Manner of Seductions, provided they interfere not with his own bad Inclinations. In short, I cannot think it unreasonable to suppose, that the Divine Providence sometimes permits a Torrent of *Fanaticism* to overflow the World, in order to punish the Wicked and

and Thoughtless, and to make Trial of those Christians that have a real Regard for Truth and Virtue. Doth not St. Paul say of such as received not the Love of the Truth, that they might be saved, that for this Cause God shall send them strong Delusion, that they should believe a Lye; that they all might be damned who believed not the Truth, but had Pleasure in Unrighteousness *.

One Reflection remains to be made, which ought to increase our Vigilance against *Fanaticism*, and make us less surprised at seeing the rapid Progress it makes. 'Tis that this Evil is of a contagious Nature, and that its Infection, like that of the Plague, communicates itself from one to the other. That Disposition to imitate, which is innate to all Men, infinitely facilitates this Communication. This Disposition is particularly seen in Children: We need not therefore wonder that they seeing their Parents make many Contortions and extraordinary Grimaces, endeavour to imitate them and lispe that Language which they have so often heard them utter. It is this Disposition which makes us easily, and without Reluctance, fall into Customs, however ridiculous, which are received by the Nation in which we live. When therefore we find ourselves, if I may say so, in the midst of a Torrent of *Fanaticism*, we certainly must have great Strength to prevent our being carried away by the Stream, along with the others.

6th Cause:
A contagious Principle in
Fanaticism

More-

* 2 Thessalon. ii. 10, 11, 12.

Moreover, it seems that there is a Power in the Infection of *Fanaticism*, which acts mechanically on Man, and seizes him before he is aware, and even against his Will. The Air and Tone of a *Fanatick*, when he knows how to manage them well, may work on other People, whose Constitution and Organs are, if I may say so, of an Unison with his own, in such a Manner as to confound their whole Frame, extort Sighs from their Breast, and Tears from their Eyes, and, in short, make them take the same Air and Tone. This Phenomenon entirely resembles that of two Violins alike tuned; no sooner is a String of the one touched, but the corresponding String of the other will likewise resound.

There are People of so delicate a Constitution and so apt to receive all Manner of Impressions, that a skilful Musician can make them ready to faint away by playing sad and mournful Airs, or make them ready to leap for Joy, if he plays brisk and gay ones. And there is no Room to doubt, but the spiritual Hymns of the *Fanaticks*, sung in an agreeable Manner in moving Airs, are one of the best Means to propagate *Fanaticism*. The Airs alone are, in this Respect, surprisingly efficacious, independently of the Words to which they are adapted.

Such like Impressions communicate themselves much more easily when there are many People assembled together in one Place. Let one go into the midst of an enraged and furious

rious Multitude, the same Rage, the same Fury, will seize him more or less, unless he is upon his Guard. Let him go into a Conventicle of pretended Devotées, who, sitting in mournful Silence, pour forth nothing but Sighs and Sobs; he will himself, by Degrees, grow sad and mournful, and soon begin to sob like them.

This goes even so far, that 'tis said, that formerly some very rational People, who had always shewn much Aversion to *Fanaticism*, and since have done no less, mixing out of mere Curiosity with the Assemblies of the *Quakers*, and seeing the Contortions and strange Grimaces they made, could not, in Spite of all their Endeavours, prevent their being seized with the same Symptoms. And I do not see why this should be called in Question, as we are every Day Witnesses of Effects, which, in Truth, are less violent, yet nevertheless of the same Nature. Let any one approach us with a chearful Look and an Air of Friendship, our Brow will immediately clear up. Let a Person in a Company yawn, immediately he sets all the rest a yawning. Let, in a close Apartment full of Women, one faint away, several others, who till that Time complained of nothing, nor found themselves at all indisposed, will often faint away one after another. There are many that cannot see People reaching to Vomit, without feeling themselves the same Inconveniency: This is assuredly no weak Impression, because it causes the Ventricle and In-

testines to act in an unnatural and violent Manner.

The Imagination, undoubtedly, has a great Share in the Effects I have just now mention'd. I might have spoken of these Things before, in the Article wherein I treated of the Power of that Faculty. It seems, nevertheless, that independently of the Imagination, there is something in the System of the Nerves, which is the principal Cause of these Appearances, and which is the Reason that the same Impression passes from one Person to another; though we do not comprehend the Manner in which this happens, at least no more than we comprehend how the Plague communicates itself. If we sometimes see strong and lusty People, whom nothing affects or moves, become nevertheless susceptible of the Impressions of *Fanaticism*, we ought no more to be surprised at it than at seeing a Person of the same Temper, and withal of good Sense, fainting away immediately at the Sight of Blood, or only on hearing others talk of Wounds and Sores.

ARTICLE 4.
The
Means for
preserv-
ing one-
self a-
gainst *Fa-
naticism*.

I have now, dear Brethren, shewn to you the Danger you run, in several Respects, of being drawn into *Fanaticism*; above have I represented to you in Colours, I believe, lively enough to make an Impression upon you, the Nature and Consequences of this pernicious Evil. All that is wanting now for compleatting my Design, is to point out to you the Means which may secure you from its Attacks, and keep you free from its Infection.

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A diligent and attentive Reader might easily collect them from what has been already said: Yet I believe it will be of more Advantage to you that I should lay them before you in a few Words. This will give me an Opportunity for making some Reflections which, in my Opinion, cannot but be useful to you, and for which I could not conveniently find Room before. I hope therefore that the Length which I am oblig'd to run into, will not displease you.

I recommend to you, in the first Place, to reflect seriously on the Perniciousness of *Fanaticism*, and on the great Danger every Body runs, in divers Respects, of falling into its Snares. I have fully explained to you both these Points. Weigh with Attention what I have said thereon: And imprint in your Minds how fatal *Fanaticism* is to the Understanding, to Reason, to all good Dispositions of the Soul, and what infinite Mischief it doth to true Religion, in banishing from it good Sense and Wisdom, in exposing it to Laughter and Contempt, in subjecting it to human Authority, in destroying moral Virtue, and opening a Door to all Manner of Vice and Impiety. The better we are acquainted with the Power of this Enemy, the more easily we shall be able to repel its Attacks.

1st Means.
To reflect
on what
has been
said in the
two fore-
going Ar-
ticles.

Cast your Eyes with Attention on all the Ways by which *Fanaticism* may insinuate itself and surprise you. Examine yourselves well, and look on which Side you lie most

open to it: Whether 'tis the Want of Knowledge in Religion that deprives you of the Means of withstanding it; or if it is the Weakness of your Constitution, either with regard to the Body or the Mind; or if the false Ideas which you indulge, or the disorder'd Passions which you entertain within yourself, expose you to the Danger of being betray'd and deliver'd up to the Enemy. The surest Way to secure us from being overcome by this Enemy is, to be exactly informed in all these Particulars.

2d Means. If in any of these Respects you find your self too weak to resist *Fanaticism*: Strengthen Use of Reason in yourselves chiefly on that Side by rational Religion Ideas of Religion and all that has Connection and study with it, and by constant Endeavours to increase your Knowledge. The more we esteem Reason, the more we shall employ its Principles to serve as a Foundation and Basis to our Ideas of Religion; the less we shall have Cause to fear the Enterprises of *Fanaticism*, and the further we shall find ourselves off from its Chimeras. Whatever others may say or think of it, 'tis certain, that Reason on just Grounds, deserves the highest Esteem, and ought to be considered as an infallible Rule in Religion; a Rule which we always ought to be very attentive to follow. Whoever swerves from it in the Principles of Knowledge he forms, immediately bewilders himself and loses Sight of Truth.

Reason, in Effect, is the essential Relation which Things stand in to one another; or, (for

(for in this Sense that Word is also frequently taken) it is the Faculty of knowing and distinguishing the essential Relations which Things bear to one another; this is what is usually called Reasoning. It is in short, nothing more than the found Understanding of a Man, the noblest Gift we have received from the Creator, and the only one that raises us above the Brutes. 'Tis this alone that leads us to the Truth, for we have no other Faculty that can enable us to discover the essential Relations of Things; without her we should be intirely in the Dark. To be against consulting of Reason, or the essential Relation of Things, is declaring, in other Words, that it is indifferent to us whether we embrace Truth or Falshood. Don't be afraid therefore to use Reason as a Rule in every Thing, and particularly in the Study of Religion.

The Understanding, and Knowledge of the Infinite Being itself, is supreme and perfect Reason, exactly agreeing in every Respect with the essential Relation of Things. This Supreme Being follows pure Reason in all his Conduct. Now if we aim at knowing and imitating him, (and herein properly Religion consists) we cannot succeed but by taking true and sound Reason for our Guide. This is, without Doubt, the End for which the wise Creator has placed in us that precious Light. Surely it was never his Will, that we should employ this most valuable of all his Gifts, only in Affairs of this transitory

World, in advancing our temporal Interest, or procuring us Repose, and the Comforts and Pleasures of this Life, (in all which Things no body disapproves the Use of Reason,) and that we should make no Manner of Use of it in Religion, where our principal Interest, our eternal Welfare is concerned.

This Gift, that is to say, Reason alone makes us fit for Religion. Without it, Brutes might serve God as well as we. How absurd is it therefore, to set the Use of Reason aside in Religion? On the contrary, it follows thence evidently and incontestibly, that Reason properly is the only one of our Faculties we should employ in Religion. All our other Faculties are too low and too ignoble: They cannot any farther be of Utility to us in that Respect, than as found Reason governs them and directs their Service.

Don't imagine, dear Brethren, that the Authority of Reason, which is founded in our Nature and in that of Religion, ought to prevail less with us on Account of our being Christians. Must we, in order to embrace the Gospel of Christ, cast off human Nature and cease to be reasonable Beings? Or, is 'that which we ought to believe and practise as Christians, void of what is essential to the Nature of all true Religion? If that were the Case, natural Religion would be more excellent and more perfect than the Gospel. For 'tis certain, that whatever is conformable to Reason, is, in every Respect, more excellent and more perfect than what is contrary to it.

Rea-

Reason alone puts us in a Condition to judge with Solidity of the Truth and Divinity of a Revelation; and alone can make Christians of us, at least such Christians as deserve to bear that Name.

Even if we were to receive from Heaven an immediate and particular Revelation, it could be directed to no other of our Faculties, but that which we call Reason and Understanding; and which consequently must be able to form rational and clear Ideas thereof. If God was pleased to reveal to us Truths, which our natural Faculty of Reasoning could never have found out: Reason alone can judge, whether those Truths are worthy of God, conformable to his Perfections and the Nature of Things, that is to say, conformable to Reason itself; otherwise one might take the greatest Absurdities for Doctrines derived from Heaven. In short, Reason must instruct us in Revelation: We have no other Faculty that can make us penetrate the Meaning of such a Revelation.

Besides, the Use of Reason is strongly recommended to the Faithful in Holy Writ. *Be not Children*, says St. Paul, *in Understanding: Howbeit in Malice be ye Children, but in Understanding be Men* *. I speak, says he in another Place, *as to wise Men*; judge ye what I say †. And again, *Prove all Things: hold fast that which is good* ‡. For 'tis manifest, that we have no other Touchstone than the

F 4 Under-

* 1 Corinth. xiv. 20. † 1 Corinth. x. 15.

† 2 Thessalon. v. 21.

Understanding and Reason, for distinguishing true from false, and for judging of Things that are taught us. Make therefore a constant Use of this Faculty in all Things that concern Religion; and mistrust such Spirits and Doctrines that endeavour to render it suspicious to you.

The Objection that Reason is corrupted, and that therefore 'tis not safe to trust to it, is of no Signification here. For 'tis not a corrupted Reason I recommend to you to make Use of, but a sound and pure one. The first doth not even deserve the Name of Reason. Reason, so far as it is the essential Relation of Things among themselves, can never be corrupted, but is eternally and unchangeably founded in the Nature of Things themselves. Our Understanding, or that Faculty which we are endowed with for discovering, as much as is necessary to us, this Relation of Things, may, through gross Ignorance and want of Reflection, grow rusty (if I may so express myself) and become unfit to be used. Prejudices, false Imaginations and disorder'd Passions may pervert, and consequently corrupt it. But in recommending to you the Use of Reason, what do I else but exhort you to cure that Corruption of your Understanding, by removing all those Obstacles which may hinder you from judging of Things with Solidity?

If you find, that of yourselves you cannot succeed herein, give Thanks to God, that he comes to your Assistance by his Revelation, and

and that his Providence has put into your Hands the Holy Scripture, that precious Pledge of his Goodness, design'd for supporting your Reason, for enlightening and extending it. Study this divine Book with all the Care and Application you are capable of. This is a Duty Reason itself lays upon us, as I have already observed *: Whence it appears, that the Use of Reason in Religion doth not in the least weaken the Authority of Holy Writ.

Neither would I have you think, that the Use of Reason is any ways repugnant to the Influence of Grace and the Spirit of God on your Hearts. I have already shewn you in the Beginning of this Discourse *, that the Operation of the Spirit is in every Respect perfectly consistent with sound Reason. So far is it therefore from being true, that a diligent Search into, and a faithful Practice of the Dictates of Reason, should deprive us of the Grace of God; that on the contrary, we may justly conclude from what I have said, that this Search and this Practice renders Man qualified to receive that Grace.

Endeavour zealously, more and more to strengthen and improve your Reason. For this Purpose, exercise yourselves continually in reflecting with Deliberation, and reasoning with Exactness and Precision on useful Subjects worthy to be known. Accustom yourselves in all your Studies and Inquiries, whatever Science or Subject they may concern, to

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set out with clear, simple and true Principles, to draw thence evident and well-connected Consequences, and admit no Proposition whatever, but such whose Certainty or Probability you can discover in this Manner.

Study with a peculiar Diligence the essential Nature of Religion, and the true Grounds on which it is founded; in order that you may be enabled to acquire just Ideas of all that belongs to it. Before all Things get a thorough Conviction, by the Help of solid Proofs, of God's Existence, Attributes and Perfections: Proofs which you may gather every where, and even find them within yourselves, but which, alas! from a fatal and deplorable Negligence are commonly little minded. Never lose Sight of the eternal and unchangeable Difference between moral Good and Evil, of that Obligation every reasonable Creature lies under to do good, of the Excellency and Value of Virtue. Imprint all these Ideas deeply in your Minds. Inquire diligently, which are the particular Duties the Nature of Things and Reason lay upon you with Regard to yourselves, your Neighbours and your Creator. Endeavour in general, to acquire a well-grounded Knowledge of Natural Religion, of that primitive and universal Religion, without a sufficient Understanding of which we never shall be well convinced of the Truth and Divinity of Revelation. If we are once well establish'd in these Principles, *Fanaticism*, with all its Illusions, will attack us in vain, and be utterly unable

unable to make us waver: No Doctrine that is in the least contrary to the adorable Perfections of that All-Holy Being, will have any Access to us. We shall reject with Horror, as dangerous and weak, every Opinion that tends to weaken and shake the Foundation of Morality.

Proceed after this, to examine, agreeable to these Principles, the Truth and Divinity of the Gospel Revelation: Let these be the Basis of your Conviction: And your Faith will then be much stronger than if it is founded only on Custom and the Authority of Men. Consider well, how excellent and worthy of God this Revelation is in itself, how pure and sublime its Morality, how glorious the Rewards, and how terrible the Punishments which are Sanctions of it; how undeniable the Proofs Jesu Christ and the Apostles have given of their divine Mission by most astonishing Miracles perform'd in the Face of the World; and how worthy of Belief the Accounts of those are, that were either Eye-Witnesses of these Wonders, or heard them from others.

Study with Attention the Holy Scripture, which is able to make you wise to Salvation. 'Tis the only authentic and original Monument of that Revelation, and consequently the only infallible Rule of our Christian Faith. Behold with an understanding Eye its Connection, and whatever you find clear there make your own, and use it for explaining that which is obscure. Get thus, from these

these original Writings themselves, a just, reasonable and compleat Idea of the Revelation, without being tied down to human Interpretations and Traditions. Learn there to know, that which is chiefly required we should understand and believe, and to distinguish it from other Articles of less Necessity. Imprint in your Hearts, how strongly Jesus Christ and the Apostles have, on all Occasions, insisted on the Necessity of Virtue and good Works, and what excellent Precepts they have given to Christians in that Respect.

When we are thus become thoroughly acquainted with the irresistible Proofs of the Christian Revelation, we shall easily perceive the infinite Difference there is between that and other pretended Revelations which are offer'd to our Acceptance, and we shall in that Respect be safe from all Seduction. As we shall from this pure Source have drawn just and rational Ideas of Christianity, we shall be secure from becoming the Sport of vain Opinions, and not suffer ourselves to be imposed upon with regard to the Nature of that holy Religion. No *Fanatick*, whatever specious Pretence he may make Use of, will be able to make us in the least doubt of the Importance and Necessity of moral Virtue.

If, in this Manner, dear Brethren, you happen to get a better grounded and more extensive Knowledge of Religion than is found among the greatest Part of Christians, don't think that such a Knowledge will *puff* you

you *up* *. On the contrary, it will inspire you with all Manner of Virtues, and in particular with a sincere Humility. A frivolous and imaginary Knowledge alone brings forth Pride, but the more we advance in the Road Reason traces for us, the more we learn, that it is Folly to pride oneself in Knowledge.

Neither be afraid, that in Case you endeavour to cultivate, strengthen and extend your Understanding, and accustom yourself to reason with Precision and Justness on Things concerning Religion, you shall degenerate from that *Simplicity*, which has always been the Glory of the *Mennonists*. Be careful not to deceive yourselves by a false Idea of that Simplicity, in believing it to consist in Ignorance. On the contrary, 'tis a moral Virtue which cannot subsist without Knowledge. That Knowledge is the most simple which follows Reason the closest: 'Tis by deviating from Reason only, that we fall into a Confusion of Ideas, whence 'tis impossible to disintangle ourselves.

You comprehend, dear Brethren, that in recommending to you the Use of Reason in Matters of Religion, I am far from having a Mind to engage you in subtle and sublime Speculations. 'Tis on the contrary, infinitely necessary for you not to concern yourselves with Things that are too high for you. You have no surer Preservative against all Seduction and Extravagancies in Religion, than to keep to those plain and simple Truths of which

* 1 Cor. viii. 1.

which you have a clear Conception. Many have strayed for no other Reason, but because they left the simple and plain Road of good Sense, and soar'd beyond the Capacity of their Understanding.

^{3d Means.} There is also a very important Means for To check preserving yourselves against *Fanaticism*, in the Impe- having a constant Eye on your Imagination tuosity of and Passions; and taking Care that they, in the Im- every respect, be ruled by Reason and be gination always subject to its Guidance. The Neglect and Pas- fions. of this Rule seems to have been the first Cause that introduced Sin into the World: For if the Woman took of the forbidden Fruit, it was because she saw, *that the Tree was good for Food, and that it was pleasant to the Eyes* *. And 'tis the same Neglect that still at this Day opens the Door to all Sorts of Errors.

We have, in particular, seen above, that a disordered Imagination and unbounded Passions, are the principal Instruments by which *Fanaticism* makes its Progress. If therefore, we have a Mind to secure ourselves against this pernicious Enemy, we ought to preclude him this Entrance, not to suffer ourselves to be carried away by our Imagination, but compel it to follow the Dictates of Reason; to hinder our Passions from swaying us, and subject them likewise to the Empire of Reason, in order that it may moderate their Action and direct them in the most convenient Manner. The best Way of succeeding herein,

* Gen. iii. 6.

in, is to cultivate and continually to exercise our Understanding, and to enrich it with a solid Knowledge of the true Religion. Not only our Understanding is thereby nourish'd and acquires new Strength, but our Imagination likewise finds in this Manner, sufficient Matter to busy itself with, and thus becomes so much the less susceptible of bad Impressions. 'Tis Sloth and Idleness that chiefly expose us to this Kind of Impression : For the Soul, which is naturally active, and cannot be without Employment, amuses itself with Dreams and Chimeras, whenever it has no better Subject to entertain itself with. We ought therefore carefully to avoid that State of Inaction, and keep ourselves continually employed in some useful Occupation.

If your Imagination is apt to please itself with joining together, and running over with Rapidity, a long Series of Ideas, you ought betimes to stop its swift Course : Follow it Step by Step : Examine all the Ideas it passes over with so much Swiftneſſ ; whether they are supported by ſolid Grounds, whether they follow regularly one from the other, whether they well agree with the Truth of Things. Whatever cannot ſtand this Trial, reject as false and ſpurious.

'Tis the Property of the Imagination not only to be peculiarly affected by Things to which it has been a long Time accustom'd, but likewife with those that are new and extraordinary. 'Tis greatly charm'd and delighted with every Thing that is Marvellous.

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An authoritative Tone of Voice and a venerable external Appearance, go a great Way towards imposing upon it.

Those Prejudices which we have suck'd in from our Infancy, and by Time are grown stronger and stronger, remain deeply imprinted in our Imagination ; and we must have a great deal of good Sense to be able to bring them to an impartial Trial : A Trial, however, which is absolutely necessary, in Case we will not give *Fanaticism* Occasion to make Use of them against ourselves. Besides, how can we know, whether those Ideas we have adopted, are not Prejudices, as long as we do not try them with Attention, in order to cast out all that are not well grounded ; of whatever long standing they may be, and how respectable soever they may appear in our Opinion.

On the other Hand, that which is new and unusual, however inviting it may appear to our Imagination, is very far from being always allowable. Most Men, notwithstanding their Indifference for solid Science and Knowledge, are fond of Novelties. Such of them as never studied Religion, follow in that Respect the Fashion, just as they do with Regard to their Dress and Way of Living. New Fashions generally please them ; thus a new Doctrine easily insinuates itself into their Minds : Nay, new Opinions, like new Modes, often charm the better, the odder they are. We ought therefore to set Bounds here to our Imagination, to moderate

derate its Eagerness for Novelty, and to examine well, whether those new Opinions proposed to us, are of any Utility, and agree with the rational Principles of our Religion.

Whatever is marvellous and incomprehensible, is particularly adapted to flatter the Imagination. People like Stories that almost surpass Belief, and the Subject of which approaches Impossibility. This is the Reason, why so much Delight is found in reading of Poetry, and why a kind of poetical Divinity, set off and embellished with singular Imaginations, is so much relished by many People, and a great many others are exceedingly fond of Mysteries, which they don't at all understand. This is a false Taste, against which we ought carefully to guard our Imagination, or cure it of it, in Case we have a mind to be secure against the Seduction of *Fanaticism*, whose Nature it is to astonish by Marvels which it presents to our Mind. Whatever is simple and clear, is most useful and ought to be of most Value to us. Moreover, if our Imagination follows the Dictates of Reason, it will find there abundance of Matter for just Admiration.

Sometimes an assumed Air of Greatness or Authority is sufficient to captivate our Imagination; and 'tis well known, that the *Fanaticks* make Use of no Means more readily than of this. Let us then take Care not to give ourselves up blindly to the Direction of any Person, whoever it may be, but examine the Grounds of the Authority he pretends to, and believe nobody on that Account upon his own Word. In short, if we thus accustom our Imagination to

keep close to Reason and not to out-run it; it will not only never be prejudicial to Reason, but even afford it great Assistance in making Head against the Illusions of *Fanaticism*.

What I have said with respect to our Imagination, holds also good with regard to our Passions, wherefore I shall have but little to add on that Account. Unruly Passions stir the Imagination up against Reason, and make it forsake its Dictates. They render our Mind quite unfit for a serious Inquiry after Truth and acquiring a solid Knowledge thereof. On the contrary, troubled Passions are always a proper Preparative for *Fanaticism*. To avoid therefore falling into its Snares, we must check the Impetuosity of our Passions, and according to the Intention of our Creator, subject all the Faculties and Motions of our Soul to the absolute Empire of Reason. Let our Zeal, Love, Hatred, Fear, Hope, Sadness, Joy, Desire of Glory, Inclination to Pleasure, all the Sentiments of our Heart, always be founded on Reason, and never go beyond its Bounds; and they will then serve as so many strong Rampsarts to keep off the Assaults of *Fanaticism*.

4th Means
To avoid
all Inter-
course
with
Fanatics.

This Evil, as I have observed above *, communicates itself like a Contagion. If you are afraid, that your natural Constitution is such as renders you liable to be infected; shun those Places and Meetings where this Venom operates with most Force, for fear it should communicate itself to you before you are aware. Oftentimes, that which in the Beginning was but mere Curiosity, degenerates into downright Enthusiasm.

What

* Page 63.

What Necessity is there for you, after you are thoroughly instructed in your Religion by Reason and the Word of God, to trouble yourselves about all new Doctrines that spring up? 'Tis enough for you to know so much, that they are incompatible with sound Reason. However, if there are People that think themselves strong enough, to have nothing to fear from this Kind of Contagion, I shall not dissuade them from assisting at the Meetings of the *Fanaticks*: For, the closer View they take of the Extravagancies of these People, the more Aversion they will have to their Chimeras.

In short, a bad State of the Body being often-times the Cause of Disorder in our Imagination and Passions, the best Preservative that can be made use of against it is, to live a temperate Life with respect to our Eating and Drinking, as well as Exercise and Rest. Too much Labour exhausts the Spirits and renders the Mind faint and languid; too little Motion makes the Body heavy and unactive and the Fluids thick. Excess in Eating and Drinking produces the same Effect. On the other Hand, too much Fasting, want of Rest, and of such Recreation as the Body stands in Need of, disorder and trouble the Brain. Frequent Instances of this have been observed amongst recluse People, who have rigorously practised such Austerities.

To such as have already contracted such an Indisposition, I recommend it to apply to skilful Physicians, that they may cure them of it, with the Blessing of God, before their Mind be entirely distemper'd and their Religion corrupted. I leave to these Gentlemen the prescribing of

such Remedies as may be most proper and most prevailing against this fatal Disorder.

6th Means To stick to the Practice of Virtue. It agrees more with my Character, to prescribe to you the Practice of Virtue and good Works, as the most sovereign Specific that can be found against *Fanaticism*. Such as not only take Reason for their Guide in all their Speculations, but also exactly observe its Rules in their Conduct, are in the strongest Manner that can be, provided against all Kinds of Seduction and Error; because it preserves in them the Light of Truth in its full Lustre. A sincere Love of Virtue qualifies the Mind for a free and impartial Inquiry into Truth; secures its natural Liberty and removes all the Obstacles which might obstruct it in any of its Operations.

The Soul, without Virtue, must necessarily be govern'd by some Passion, or irregular Desire. Neither can we without being virtuous, draw any Assistance against *Fanaticism*, from those Remedies we have before mentioned. Virtue alone, founded on sound Ideas of Religion, is capable of restraining the Impetuosity of our Imagination and regulating our Passions. It really strengthens our Soul and gives it Constancy and Stediness: For it keeps its Faculties in their true natural Order, and preserves an Harmony and Subordination among them: Whereas, the Moment we nourish within ourselves any criminal Passion, we subject ourselves to the Danger of being betrayed by it into Superstition and *Fanaticism*. A Mind that is fond of deceiving itself, proposes, in delivering itself up to their Delusions, to make some Compensation

tion for its Vices and Irregularities, and in some Degree to lessen their Guilt.

If therefore, according as Reason requires, you value moral Virtue and the Observance of God's Commandments as the most noble and essential Part of Religion; act in Conformity to this just Idea, and let the Practice of Virtue be the Object of your warmest Endeavours and most unwearied Zeal. If you take so wise a Resolution, you will daily grow more and more sensible of the infinite Value of Virtue, and constantly receive still livelier Impressions of its Beauty. Thus, having obtained by Study and Experience a Knowledge of the true Essence of Religion, you will have no Room to be afraid of being seduced from it by any false Ideas which may present themselves. Such Doctrines as are foreign to it, how much soever set off, will find little Access in your Minds. In particular, *Fanaticism* will in vain endeavour to take you off from Virtue; all its Attempts will have no other Effect than to diminish its own Credit. You will reject, without Hesitation, all those Arguments that may be produced in its Favour, either as artful Fictions of Impostors, or idle Tales of vain Bablers. With what Scorn and Contempt must a Man endowed with solid Virtue and manly Piety, look down upon the wild Extravagancies, Excesses and Transports of *Fanaticism*?

If we have once accustomed ourselves to Virtue, tasted those pure inward Comforts that attend the Practice of it, and experienced that Satisfaction and inestimable Contentment Peace of Conscience gives; we shall make but little

Account of those tumultuous Emotions of the Soul, that are the mere Effect of Passions, and those pretended lively Sensations of the Operation of Grace, which have their Seat only in the Imagination, and which, nevertheless, are the Bait and Allurement of *Fanaticism*. Virtue will fill our Soul with Joy, and keep our Body in Health: An Effect this, which it is in its own Nature qualified to produce. Thus it will prevent gloomy Clouds of Sadness, and Melancholy rising in our Soul, whereof *Fanaticism* might make Use, to stir up Storms and Tempests, and under Favour of such Frights and Terrors, to break in upon us.

Virtue, on taking Possession of the Heart, banishes thence Pride, and with it that rash Pretence of being directed by an immediate Inspiration of the Spirit of God. A Man, to whom his Conscience gives that pleasing Testimony, that he *has renounced Impiety, and the Lusts of this World, and lives in Conformity to Temperance, Justice, and Piety*, will not suffer himself to be imposed upon by any particular pretended Signs or Characters of Regeneration, certain arbitrary Marks of God's Favour, and our Communion with him. The more constantly we adhere to Virtue, the greater Progress we shall make in it, and the more secure we shall be from being seduced by *Fanaticism*.

Virtue not only preserves those that practise it free from the Contagion of *Fanaticism*, but it puts them likewise in a Condition to stop its Progress among their Fellow-Creatures, and thus to become an Ornament and Support to the true Religion. *Fanaticism* would never dare

dare to shew its Face, if every Christian upon reasonable Grounds, was convinced of his Faith, and lived a virtuous Life. If we made appear the Strength of our Faith by our Works, those pious People that have good Intentions, but want Knowledge, would no where else, but among us, look about for Means of advancing their Piety, nor suffer themselves so easily to be misled by the outward Shew of Devotion the *Fanaticks* deck themselves with. As much as a rational Faith is superior to Opinions inconsistent with Reason; so much greater Charms will our Virtue and good Works have to win over well-intention'd Persons, and make them imitate us, than the pretended Piety of the *Fanaticks*, which in the bottom is nothing but a mere Creature of the Passions. *Fanaticism* could not any longer take Advantage from the Corruption of Christians to establish itself among them. It would appear, at first Sight, that there is no Necessity at all for new Revelations and extraordinary Operations of the Spirit of God, to plant Virtue and true Piety in Christians.

And here I cannot forbear expressing my just Indignation against those, who, whilst they are very zealous for the Purity of the Christian Religion, and strongly maintain the Necessity of Virtue and good Works, pay not the least Regard thereto in their Conduct, listen only to their Passions, and give themselves up to Pride, Avarice, and the most shameful Irregularities. These are they who darken and eclipse the Lustre and Glory of Religion, and give the greatest Offence to weak Persons. They are of all Sinners the most blame-worthy; one might

say, with Truth, they are real Monsters: For, what can there be more monstrous than such a perpetual Contradiction between their Knowledge and Behaviour, between that which they profess to believe, and that which they practice? The greater and stronger our Motives to Virtue are, the more we ought to be ashamed if those Motives do not direct our Conduct.

Let us make appear by our Conduct, that a reasonable Faith has no less Power and Influence over us, than Superstition and chimerical Opinions have over others. Let us have as much Zeal in our Thoughts, Words and Actions, to make Truth and Virtue triumph, as *Fanaticism* makes appear to undermine one as well as the other, and substitute its own Illusions in their Places: Nay, let us have a still greater Zeal for all that is good, honest and well-becoming, as the Cause we defend is of much greater Importance, and more Holy than that of *Fanaticism*; and then this Enemy, through Shame, will not dare to shew itself any more. If once the Light of Truth and Virtue were to shine in its full Lustre among Christians, Night-Owls and Bats would be afraid to peep out of their dismal lurking Holes.

7th Means
To consider that
Fanaticism
has infi-
nuated it-
self into all
Religi-
ons.

The last Means I have to lay before you, for securing you against the Snares of *Fanaticism*, is, that you should consider, that this Monster has insinuated itself into all Religions, and Sects, and always with the same Character and essential Qualities, though it has assumed different Forms at different Times. This Consideration will prevent your being surprised at seeing this Spirit of Delusion appear again in our Days.

Days. You will be less amazed at the Marvellous that attend it, and easily comprehend that this Marvellous is far from being a Proof of Truth and Divinity, because the *Fanatics*, who in this Respect, don't in the least give Way to each other, nevertheless maintain contradictory Propositions.

The Heathens themselves had formerly their *Fanatics* in their Priests and Priestesses, who, when they were, according to their Opinion, possess'd or influenced by their Gods, made the strongest Motions, falling into violent Convulsive-Fits, foaming with Rage, and running up and down like mad People: All these Signs of Madness and Fury were then most visible when they delivered their pretended Oracles. We find that the same Spirit reigns to this Day in modern Paganism; and that in many Places, the blind Multitude is miserably cheated by Impostors, who persuade them to any thing they please*. Many of the ancient Philosophers, following the Chimera's of their Imagination more than Reason, were caught in the same Snares. They dreamt of, I know not what Revelations, Illuminations, Secret Conversations with divers Sorts of Spirits of the first Order, and imaginary Deities. They boasted hereby to come at Perfection, and by a certain magical Power, to bring many surprising Things to pass.

This

* See, among others, *Kæmpfer's History of Japan*, Book iii. ch. v. pag. 167, 168. *Corn. de Bruin's Voyages*, pag. 11. in fol. *Nieuhof's Voyage to the East-Indies*, pag. 52, 82.

This dangerous Taste communicated itself from these Philosophers to the Christians, among whom it soon made a fatal Progress. Faith became sophisticated, Manners corrupted, and the Church disfigured; so that St. Paul had more than one Reason to exhort the *Colossians*, *to beware lest any Man should spoil them through such a Philosophy and vain Deceit**. It seems that the Apostles themselves had in their Time, to struggle against *Fanaticism*: For what Necessity was there else to admonish the Faithful, *not to believe every Spirit* †. From this poisonous Source, all the foolish Opinions of the Hereticks afterwards sprung forth. The same Spirit made *Julian* to become an Apostate. *Fanaticism* chiefly fixed itself in *Egypt*, and continuing gradually to make greater Progress, it arrived at last to its highest Pitch, in those dark Ages, when the Religion of Christians consisted in nothing more than Fables and Imaginations, or ridiculous Ceremonies.

Monachism took its Rise from *Fanaticism*. This is the Origin of that Number of religious Orders, the Church of *Rome* is over-burden'd with. The Founders of most of them were superstitious and enthusiastick Persons. They establish'd their different Institutions upon Revelations they fancied to have received.. *Fanaticism* in one and the same Century, *viz.* the Thirteenth, made appear all the Extravagancy 'tis capable of, in *Francis*, who preached to Swallows and Fishes; and all its Fury and Barbarity in *Dominicus*, who was the first Author

of

* *Coloss. ii. 8.*† *1 John iv. 1.*

of the *Inquisition*. Each of them made an infinite Number of Disciples; and thus forming two great Parties, they by their Jealousy, Envy, and Hatred, have oftentimes been prompted to attack one another with Fierceness and Fury. Has there ever been a more rank and silly *Fanatick* than the famous *Spaniard*, *Ignatius Loyola*, Founder of that powerful and formidable Order of the *Jesuits*, who through the many villainous and execrable Undertakings they have been guilty of, have justly drawn upon themselves the Hatred of all that love Virtue, Religion, and Peace. 'Tis by that same Spirit of Enthusiasm, that *Francis Xaverius*, and others, have acquired so great Power to their Society in the *Indies*.

The *Jansenists*, who are the greatest Enemies the Order of *Jesuits* can have in the Church of *Rome*, have nevertheless not been more free from the Infection of *Fanaticism*. What Scenes have the *Convulsionists* of that Party not played in our Days, on the Tomb of their *Abbot de Paris*? Very little Time however was sufficient for seeing these Prodigies vanish into Smoke.

The same Spirit has also often shewed itself in the Protestant Churches: Even the Times of the Reformation were not free from it. The *Lutherans* had a *Jacob Boehm*, with his Adherents, besides a Swarm of corrupted *Pietists*.

Among the *Calvinists*, what Advantage did not the crafty *Cromwell* draw from *Fanaticism*, with Respect to the Part he chose to act? And how

how powerfully did the same Spirit operate in the last Century, in the Society of the *Quakers*? They talk'd of nothing but Inspirations, Visions, and Dreams; and shewed an incredible Zeal for propagating their Sect. They found but too many Followers in these Provinces, and even in our Communion. There are old People who still remember *Antoinette de Bourignon**; She, *Labadie* and *Poiret*, made in their Time as much Noise as any *Fanatick* in our Days can make.

Don't be surprised at my telling you, that *Mahomet* was not only an Impostor, but also an *Enthusiast* and great *Fanatick*. The History of his Life, and what is contained in his *Alcoran*, leave no Room to doubt of it.

The *Cabala* of the *Jews*, what is it else but a Production of disorder'd Brains, a Medley of Imaginations, and a Chaos of Dreams, on the different Orders of Spirits, and their marvellous Operations?

Compare all these different Appearances of *Fanaticism* with one another, and you will find, that, though it has varied in a great many Respects, and has not always carried its Extravagancies to the same Degree; it has, nevertheless, always had the same distinguishing Character, and the same essential Qualities. By these means, I am apt to believe, you will be secured from sacrificing the reasonable Faith which

* Some rank *Antionette de Bourignon* among the *Roman Catholicks*.

which you make Profession of, to its wild and chimerical Opinions.

Thus I think I have made good what I proposed. All that remains for me to do, is, to beseech Almighty God to pour forth his Blessing on this Work, that it may be to many an effectual Preservative against the Infection of *Fanaticism*. As for those that actually are the Sport of its Illusions, my Exhortations are not directed to them. I rather fear that my Letter will exasperate and incense them against me, instead of curing them. Nor do I know what Means I could make use of, with an appearance of Success, to bring about this last Effect. Good Sense and solid Reason only could reclaim them: But all this is to them an Object of Contempt, and sometimes even of the highest Aversion. The strongest Arguments are in vain, as soon as they imagine they feel within themselves the contrary. They take this Sensation, or Feeling, for a sufficient Answer to all that is objected to them. When a Man is once come to this Pass, we must expect his Recovery only from the Grace of God, from some lucid Interval, which may give his Imagination Time to cool, from the Assistance which Medicines afford in such Cases; or, in short, from a sorrowful Conviction of his Folly, produced by Experience.

I allow, that I have not treated *Fanaticism* with Lenity, and that the Picture I have drawn of it, is very frightful. However, after having examined every thing over again, I think I have

have not said too much: The Importance of the Subject, in my Opinion, required that I should indulge my Zeal, and not treat it in a slight and superficial Way, but with such Force and Energy, as might make a proper Impression. There was a Necessity of laying open all that is odious in this Evil, in order to raise in you the highest Aversion to it.

Nevertheless, don't believe, dear Brethren, that my Design is to stir you up against the Followers of *Fanaticism*, and to inspire you with a Hatred against their Persons: God forbid! We are, as Christians, obliged to treat them with Charity, Meekness, Forbearance, and Compassion. This Christian Duty we must never loose Sight of, how pressing soever the Motive may be, that spurs us on to oppose *Fanaticism* itself.

One may with great Probability, say, in general, that there are among the *Fanaticks*, a great many Cheats and Impostors, whose Vices *Fanaticism* is extremely well adapted to conceal. It has been so formerly, as Experience has shewn; nor is there the least Reason to think that it is not the same at present. However, we ought to take great Care not to judge rashly of any Person in particular, nor to accuse any one, be it who it will, of such an enormous Excess, or even to suspect him thereof without having convincing Proofs, or at least, such as are of very great Weight: And even though we should have observed in any one some Circumstances to make us doubt of his Sincerity, it would

would, notwithstanding, be too severe a Sentence, should we immediately pronounce him an Hypocrite or Impostor.

If we examine nicely into the Characters of Men, we shall find in many of them a surprising Mixture of Virtue and Vice. This Observation will hold good, particularly with regard to *Fanaticks*. On the one Hand, I have shewn at Length †, from the Nature of *Fanaticism* itself, that such as go over to it, with the best Intentions imaginable, may with great Facility, by some predominant Passion, be hurried away to Actions that are contrary to those Intentions. On the other Hand, 'tis no less easy for an Hypocrite, who at his first setting out, only intended to deceive others, at last to deceive himself, and to become the Dupe of his own Illusions. Thus we have Reason to think, that there is in many *Fanaticks*, a formal Design of Cheating, mixed with a foolish Persuasion, that they are really conducted by the Spirit of God: Two very different Principles, which it may be, they themselves cannot always distinguish; and much less can they distinguish, who only see the external Part of their Behaviour.

Moreover, there is, in my Opinion, no room to doubt, that among the Followers of *Fanaticism*, many pious Souls are to be found, who, having through Ignorance embraced it, remain always blind enough not to perceive their Mistake; and yet whose Attachment to Virtue is so strong as never to suffer

† Page 34, 39.

suffer even the most erroneous Opinions to eradicate it from their Heart, though otherwise, this is the natural Effect which such Opinions might be supposed to have upon them. And why should we not of every Body in particular, make this Supposition, as long as we have no Proof of the Depravation of his Heart?

Such as are Brain-sick, deserve more our Pity and Compassion, than to be hated and persecuted. Are they not indeed to be lamented, who have not the Use of their Reason in Things of the highest Importance, that is in Religion, or, which is the same Thing, who persuade themselves that its Use in such Matters, is forbidden them.

Persecution for religious Opinions is always very unjust, and consequently is not permitted to be made use of against *Fanaticks*, unless they disturb the public Tranquillity, or openly violate the Laws of the Civil Society. And even then they ought only to be punish'd for the Violences they have committed and not for their Opinions, though they are the Cause of their Crime. Sentiments, how extravagant soever they may be, are never the Object of Civil Punishment. It would certainly have been Madness to punish that Fool of *Athens*, who imagined that all the Ships that entered the Port belonged to him; though in Consequence of this extravagant Opinion, he would have made no Scruple, if he had had the Power, to seize them all.

Force

Force and Persecution are in particular very bad Means to stop *Fanaticism*. On the contrary, it happens often that the *Fanatics* are more strongly animated by the Violence that is used against them. They make a Merit of their Sufferings, and these Sufferings contribute greatly to increase their Party; whereas, by leaving them in entire Liberty, they by Degrees dwindle away.

It doth not follow from hence, that we are obliged, or that it is Prudence to encourage *Fanaticism*, or to receive its Followers into our Communion, and to give them an Opportunity to propagate their Doctrine. But between this and the former Extreme, there is, without Doubt, a very wide Medium.

If some among us are unhappily infected with this bad Leaven, let us shew them all **Christian Forbearance**; let us treat them with Kindness and Indulgence, always ready to do them Service, avoiding warm and useless Disputes with them, as far as the Truth and the Interest of Religion will allow.

Such as boast of having within themselves an infallible Spirit, whose Decisions they set on the same Level with the written Word of God, and openly and designedly seek to discredit Virtue, can have no Pretence to be tolerated in our Churches, or to hold a brotherly Communion with us: For the Holy Scripture is the Rule and Basis of that Toleration and Communion; and as they join to its Authority another Authority as infallible, they form of

H their

their own Accord, a separate Society: And besides, this Demand can so much the less be granted, as their Tenets utterly destroy the very Nature and Essence of all rational Religion.

The vain-glorious Pretensions of some, and the Extravagancies of other *Fanaticks*, deserve, without Doubt, our highest Contempt. 'Tis not unlawful to deride and represent them in a ridiculous Manner. This Method may be useful even to those in whose Presence 'tis made use of. But then we must take especial Care not to suffer ourselves to fall into indecent and unbecoming Jeasts. The Affair we are treating of is at the Bottom of the highest Importance, and this is a Consideration we ought never to lose Sight of. Our great Aim must be not only to excite Mirth, but to convey the Dictates of true Wisdom through the agreeable Vehicle of Wit.

I thought I could not in a more convenient Manner end this long Letter, than by these short Reflections. Read it with Attention and weigh every Thing impartially. Make a profitable Use of what you find there to agree with the Truth and proper to inspire you with Virtue. If you discover any Mistakes, excuse them in Consideration of my Weakness and good Intention.

I conclude, dear Brethren, with the Request and Wish of St. *Paul* * to the *Colossians*, which I make to you from the Bottom of my Heart:

That

* 1 *Coloss.* i. 9, 10, 11.

That you may be filled with the Knowledge of God's Will, in all Wisdom and spiritual Understanding. That ye may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing; being fruitful in every good Work, and increasing in the Knowledge of God: Strengthned with all Might according to his glorious Power, unto all Patience and Long-suffering with Joyfulness.

I am,

Your affectionate Brother,

At Harlingen,
Nov. 7, 1750.

JOHN STINSTRA.

F I N I S.

Just Publish'd, by A. Linde.

A CANDID NARRATIVE of the *Rise and Progress* of the HERRNHUTERS, commonly call'd MORAVIANS, or, *Unitas Fratrum*, with a short Account of their Doctrines, drawn from their own Writings. To which are added, Observations on their Politics in general, and particularly on their Conduct whilst in the County of Büdingen in the Circle of the Upper-Rhine in Germany. By Henry Rimius.

Lee

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